

The Royal Guard of Oman (RGO) on Wednesday celebrated its annual day, which falls on November 1 every year, under the auspices of Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior. The ceremony, which was held at the parade field of the RGO Command, included the passing out of new recruits. The ceremony also included diverse programmes that depict the development and modernisation enjoy by the RGO under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander. **DETAILS ON P4**



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PLANS AFOOT FOR EV MANUFACTURING IN DUQM SEZ



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DE KOCK, VAN DER DUSSEN TONS HELP SA THRASH NZ



P20

THE RELEVANCE OF MUSCAT ART AND ITS COMMENTARY ON PRESSING ISSUES



MUSCAT

HM THANKED BY EMIR OF KUWAIT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from Shaikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Jabir al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, in reply to His Majesty's congratulatory cable on the 3rd anniversary of his accession to power. In the cable, Shaikh Nawaf expressed his utmost thanks and appreciation for His Majesty's congratulations and best wishes. He lauded the deep-rooted historical and fraternal relations binding the two countries and their peoples, wishing His Majesty good health and well-being. Shaikh Nawaf also wished the Omani people further progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty.



MAJLIS ASH'SHURA TO ELECT CHAIRMAN

Following the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Majlis Ash'Shura will hold an extraordinary session on Thursday (November 9) to elect a chairman and two deputy chairmen for the Majlis's 10th term (2023-2027). Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of the Majlis Ash'Shura, said that the Secretariat-General has finalised all steps to hold the extraordinary session. The session will be conducted electronically as per the standards set and implemented in its 9th term, he added. Al Nadabi pointed out that, according to established procedures, the oldest member will preside over the session if he is not a candidate wishing to contest the position of chairman or deputy chairman. — ONA

Royal Decrees appoint State Council and OHRC members

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday issued 2 Royal Decrees. Royal Decree No (75/2023) appointing members at the State Council. Article (1) appoints the following names as members at the State Council. Ahmed bin Saif bin Musallam al Rawahi, Eng Ahmed bin Saleh bin Ali al Jahdhami; Ishaq bin Yaaqoub bin Ahmed al Sawafi, Dr Bukhait bin Salim bin

Bukhait Bait Fadhil, Dr Juma bin Khalifa bin Mansoor al Busaidy, Dr Hussain bin Sulaiman bin Mohammed al Salmi, Hamad bin Khamis bin Abdullah al Amri, Dr Hamad bin Salim bin Rashid al Rawahi, Hamad bin Nasser bin Abdullah al Nabhani, Dr Hamad bin Hilal bin Hamoud al Yahmadi, Shaikh Hamad bin Hilal bin Ali al Maamari, Dr Hamoud bin Darwish bin Salim al Hassani, Dr Hamoudah

bin Mohammed bin Khalfan al Harsoosi, Dr Hanifa bin Ahmed bin Ali al Qasmi, Dr Khalaf bin Salim bin Abdullah al Ishaqi, Dr Khamis bin Saud bin Said al Toobi, Eng Khamis bin Mohammed bin Muhanna al Saadi, Dr Rashid bin Salim bin Hamad al Masroori, Dr Rashid bin Saif bin Musabah al Meherzi, Dr Rashid bin Mohammed bin Juma al Ghailani, Sayyidah Rawan bint Ahmed bin Thabit

al Busaidiyah, Dr Rouhiyah bint Rashid bin Mohammed al Khayfiyah, Sayyid Zaki bin Hilal bin Saud al Busaidy, Dr Zuwaina bint Saleh bin Issa al Maskariyah, Dr Salim bin Sultan bin Salim al Ruzaiqi, Dr Salim bin Salayum Saleh al Junaibi, Salim bin Musallam bin Ali Qatan, Sareyah bint Khalfan bin Amer al Hadiyah, Dr Suaad bint Mubarak bin Said al Fouriyah, Shaikh Sultan

bin Mohammed bin Salim al Mad'hani, Shaikh Sultan bin Mohammed bin Sultan al Mahrrouqi, Shaikh Sultan bin Mattar bin Salim al Azizi, Dr Saleem bin Salim bin Khalfan al Rushaidi, Dr Sanaa bint Sabil bin Sulaiman al Balushiya, Sanaa bint Abdulrahman bin Issa al Khanjari, Eng Saif bin Hamad bin Saif al Salmani, Shaikh Dr Saif bin Muhanna bin Saif al Hinai, **TURN TO P2**

SAI CRUCIAL IN RAISING STANDARDS



HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, on Wednesday visited the State Audit Institution (SAI). He was accompanied by Shaikh Al Fadhl bin Mohammed al Harthy, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers. The visit underscores the attention that the government accords to institutional action for the realisation of efficiency in implementing specialisations and raising the standards of performance. HH Sayyid Fahd underlined the role of SAI in backing Oman's comprehensive and sustainable development, based on the powers entrusted to the institution and in accordance with the goals set for Oman Vision 2040 and the 10th Five Year Plan. **DETAILS ON P2 (PHOTO BY MOHAMMED AL RASHDI)**

Sayyid Theyazin, Shaikh Theyab discuss bilateral relations



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said with Shaikh Theyab bin Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan at his office in Muscat. — ONA

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, received at his office on Wednesday Shaikh Theyab bin Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, Chairman of the Office of Development and Martyrs Families Affairs

at the Presidential Court of the United Arab Emirates. During the meeting, cordial conversations were exchanged. The meeting also reviewed the advanced, bilateral relations between the two countries and means of promoting them in various spheres. — ONA

Oman flays Israeli aggression on Jabalia Camp

AGGRESSION AGAINST GAZA STRIP A WAR CRIME

TARGETING PUBLIC FACILITIES A HEINOUS ACT

UN SHOULD PUT END TO THESE INHUMANE ACTIONS

CONCRETE STEPS NEEDED TO STOP ISRAEL'S WAR

PEACE POSSIBLE WITH THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has expressed its condemnation and denunciation of the Israeli occupation forces' targeting Jabalia Camp in Gaza Strip, leaving hundreds of innocent civilians dead or injured. In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Wednesday, Oman described the ongoing indiscriminate and brutal aggression against Gaza Strip and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories as a war crime and a flagrant violation of the international law and the international humanitarian law. In the statement, Oman said that targeting public facilities and killing and besieging civilians constitute a heinous aggression against humanity.

Oman urged the international community and the Security Council to put an immediate end to these inhumane practices against the Palestinian people, who, it affirmed, only demand their inherent rights that are approved by resolutions of international legitimacy. The statement pointed out that the resolutions issued by the Security Council legitimise the Palestinians people's right to regain their occupied lands and live in freedom and dignity within the purview of the Two-State Solution.

PRACTICAL STEPS During a phone call with James Cleverly, the United Kingdom's Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and



A Palestinian boy sits amidst destruction in the aftermath of an Israeli strike in the Jabalia camp for Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip, on Wednesday. — AFP

Development Affairs, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, stressed the importance of taking urgent, concrete measures to stop Israel's war on Gaza and to focus on opening humanitarian corridors to address the life-threatening catastrophe experienced by civilians in Gaza. The two ministers exchanged views about the ongoing Israeli military escalation in Gaza Strip, leading to more civilian casualties. They stressed the need to respect the international law and end the cycle of violence. The ministers also reiterated the international community's stance on achieving comprehensive peace in accordance with the Two-State Solution. **TURN TO P5**



SAYYID FAHD VISITS SAI



HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said during his visit to the State Audit Institution

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, on Wednesday visited the State Audit Institution (SAI). He was accompanied by Shaikh Al Fadhl bin Mohammed al Harthy, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers. The visit underscores the attention that the government accords to institutional action for the realisation of efficiency in implementing specialisations and raising the standards of performance. HH Sayyid Fahd was received upon his arrival by Shaikh Ghosn bin Hilal al Alawi, Chairman of the SAI, among other officials of the

institution. At the outset of the visit, HH Sayyid Fahd underlined the role of SAI in backing Oman's comprehensive and sustainable development, based on the powers entrusted to the institution and in accordance with the goals set for Oman Vision 2040 and the 10th Five-Year Plan. HH Sayyid Fahd reaffirmed the keenness of the Council of Ministers to cooperate with the SAI in all areas of relevance to its tasks. For his part, Shaikh Ghosn expressed his thanks and appreciation to HH Sayyid Fahd for accepting the invitation to visit the SAI and meet officials in charge, within the context of a drive

to consolidate cooperation and partnership among government institutions. Shaikh Ghosn valued the sincere support, care and attention accorded to the SAI by His Majesty the Sultan. He affirmed the determination of the SAI to perform its tasks with the highest levels of efficiency. Acting in partnership with the departments under its supervision, the SAI strives to achieve added value and optimal of resources, with the prime aim of maintaining the steady growth of the Omani economy, he affirmed. Shaikh Ghosn underlined the positive role of the Council of Ministers in promoting the success of SAI tasks that contribute to

enhancing the national action. He expressed his appreciation for the attention that the Council of Ministers accords to SAI annual report, which, he said, is submitted to His Majesty the Sultan and later to the State Council and Majlis Ashishura. HH Sayyid Fahd listened to a briefing about the strategic plan of the SAI and its cooperation with other departments in implementing the scheduled programmes and activities. The briefing also touched on the SAI's future plans in grooming national human resources and harnessing Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and digital transition initiatives. — ONA

Royal Decrees appoint State Council and OHRC members

FROM PAGE 1

Dr Shamsa bint Masoud bin Nasser al Shaibaniyah, Dr Saleh bin Mohammed bin Saif al Fahdi, Dr Sabah bint Mohammed bin Amer al Maawaliyah, Shaikh Dr Talib bin Hilal bin Sultan al Hosni, Dr Dhafir bin Awadh bin Badr Mur'ee al Shanfari, Dr Aisha bint Hamad bin Sa'ayid al Darmakiyah, Dr Aisha bint Said bin Mohammed al Ghabshiyah, Sayyid Adil bin Al Murdas bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Dr Amer bin Nasser bin Amer al Mataeni, Abbas bin Ali bin Mahmoud al Humaid, Dr Abdulkarim bin Ali bin Jawad al Lawati, Dr Abdullah bin Hamad bin Marzouq al Badi, Dr Abdullah bin Kahmis bin Juma al Kindi, Dr Abdullah bin Saif bin Salim al Ghafri, Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Amer al Sarmi, Shaikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Humaid al Nadabi, Eng Azza bint Sulaiman bin Said al Ismaili, Shaikh bin Ali bin Ahmed bin Mishari al Shamsi, Dr Ali bin Hamdan bin Yousef al Shirawi, Dr Ali bin Saud bin Ali al Bimani, Ali bin Mubarak bin Marhoon al Amri, Eng Omar bin Khalfan bin Nasser al Wahibi, Dr Ohood bint Said bin Rashid al Balushiyah, Awadh bin Said bin Ali Baqweer, Dr Issa bin Sulaiman bin Said al Amri, Shaikh Dr Ghazi bin Said bin Abdullah Al Bahar al Rawas. Lamees bint Abbas bin Asad Allah al Bahraniyah, Shaikh Majid bin Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Majid bin Abdullah bin Mubarak al Alawi, Mohsin bin Ghuloom bin Haji Mohammed al Ajmi, Mohammed bin Abu Bakar bin Salim al Ghassani, Mohammed bin Ahmed bin Said al Amri, Mohammed bin Hassan bin Ali al Shih, Dr Mohammed bin Humaid bin Nasser al Wardi, Mohammed bin Salim bin Hamoud al Harthy, Dr Mohammed bin Said bin Amir al Hajri, Shaikh Mohammed bin Said bin Ali al Qatabi, Dr Mohammed bin Sulaiman bin Abdullah al Rashdi, Mohammed bin Ali bin

Saleh al Marjabi, Dr Mohammed bin Awadh bin Salim al Rawas, Dr Mohammed bin Nasser bin Ali al Saqri, Dr Maryam bint Abdullah bin Rajab al Awadi, Maha bint Sulaiman bin Barakat al Lamkiyah, Nasser bin Saif bin Yahya al Haddabi, Eng Nasser bin Mohammed bin Nasser al Hajeri, Eng Nahla bint Abdulwahab al Hamdiyah, Shaikh Hilal bin Hamad bin Saif al Kalbani, Shaikh Dr Hilal bin Ali bin Zaher al Hinal, and Dr Yahya bin Mansour bin Nasser al Wahibi. Article (2) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on its date of issue. Royal Decree No (76/2023) appoints members of Oman Human Rights Commission. Article (1) appoints the following names as members of Oman Human Rights Commission: Ahmed bin Abdullah bin Ali al Owaisi, Dr Rashid bin Hamad bin Humaid al Balushi, Saud bin Saleh bin Ahmed al Maawali, Dr Saleh bin Hamad bin Mohammed al Barashdi, Aida bint Shamis bin Zayed al Hashmiyah, Mohammed bin Ali bin Khamis al Marzouqi, Maymouna bint Said bin Rashid al Sulaimaniyah, Dr Yahya bin Mohammed bin Zaher al Hinal, Aqeel bin Alawi bin Saleh Ba'Omar, Representative of the Foreign Ministry, Jamal bin Salim bin Saif al Nabhani, Representative of the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, Sulaiman bin Saif bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Representative of the Ministry of Education, Abdulaziz bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saadi, Representative of the Ministry of Labour, Dr Jamal bin Eid bin Nasser al Khadouri, Representative of the Ministry of Health, Labiba bint Mohammed bin Hamad al Maawaliyah, Representative of the Ministry of Social Development. Article (2) says that the Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA



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Directors' Report

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we are pleased to present to you the financial results of the Company for the nine-month period ended September 30, 2023. Over the last year, while we have witnessed gradual recovery from the effects of the pandemic, we have also seen the negative impact of the threat of a worldwide recession and higher interest rates resulting in slower growth and restrained business sentiments across the globe. In Oman, we have seen healthier growth rates and inflation is much better controlled than we have witnessed in certain other geographies. We continue to improve our technological capabilities to be aligned with the digital transformation happening across the world, in order to provide solutions that deliver best in class customer experience. With a well-diversified geographical presence across Oman (21 branches), coupled with a broad product profile, your Company is well positioned to provide innovative financial solutions for Retail, Corporate and SME segments. Your Company has won the Best Performing Company award in the mid-cap category at the prestigious Alam Al-Iktisaad Awards 2023. This serves as a testament of our continuous efforts at providing innovative financial services solutions to our customers and scaling new heights in the Sultanate of Oman's finance and leasing sector.

Your Company continues to adopt a prudent approach to credit approvals keeping in view the overall macroeconomic scenario and perceived increase in credit risk. Within this policy, our approach has been to target customers who satisfy our credit risk appetite. We anticipate a reasonable growth to our asset base in the medium term. Due to your company's strong financial position, we have repaid the Perpetual Bonds of RO 18.2 million in the first call date in March 2023. The total regulatory capital of Omani Rials 102.94 million post the redemption of the Perpetual Bond issue on the first call date is the highest among Finance and Leasing Companies (FLCs) which gives us a strong base on which to build our business. Your Company remains the largest finance and leasing Company in the Sultanate in terms of asset size, branch network, revenues and profit. The profit before tax was at RO 9.42 million (RO 8.02 million in September 2022) while Net Investment in Lease was at RO 464.33 million (RO 425.45 million in December 2022). Profit after tax was RO 8.01 million as compared to RO 6.81 million in September 2022, showing an increase of 17.50%. Your Company is fully compliant with the provisioning norms prescribed by the Central Bank of Oman and the International Financial Reporting Standards. We have added to our credit reserves through additional

overlay over the IFRS9 requirement in order to be prepared for future possible challenges and incremental risk in the portfolio. Your Company remains committed to Omanisation and as of September 30, 2023, the number of Omani employees was 314 out of the total workforce of 344. The Omanisation percentage works out to 91.28% which is higher than the given target of 90%. Your Company continues to remain committed to providing career growth and development of Omani nationals through ongoing training programs in line with their job requirement. We will continue to maintain momentum on employee engagement initiatives, development of future skills, managerial and leadership capabilities for their professional development. We extend our sincere gratitude to the Central Bank of Oman, Capital Market Authority, Muscat Stock Exchange, our bankers, depositors, customers and shareholders for the support extended towards the growth of the Company. On behalf of the Board of Directors, we also thank the management and staff for their dedication and hard work which has enabled us to establish ourselves as the most trusted Company in the sector. Hani Muhammad Al Zubair
Chairman

Unaudited Condensed Interim Statement Of Profit Or Loss And Other Comprehensive Income For The			
	Nine months ended 30 September 2023 RO '000	Nine months ended 30 September 2022 RO '000	
Income			
Income from financing activities	35,472	31,973	
Finance costs	(16,517)	(13,252)	
Net finance income	18,955	18,721	
Other operating income	1,888	2,117	
	20,843	20,838	
Expenses			
Operating expenses	(8,914)	(8,264)	
Depreciation	(415)	(434)	
Amortization	(260)	(246)	
Net impairment loss on finance leases, working capital finance and factoring receivables	(1,811)	(3,987)	
Bad debts written (off) / back	(25)	108	
Total expenses	(11,425)	(12,823)	
Profit before tax	9,418	8,015	
Income tax expense	(1,413)	(1,202)	
Profit after tax	8,005	6,813	
Other comprehensive income			
Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss			
Movement in revaluation reserve – net of tax	6	6	
Change in fair value of cash flow hedge	(445)	1,547	
Other comprehensive (loss) / income	(439)	1,553	
Total comprehensive income	7,566	8,366	
Basic and diluted earnings per share (RO)	0.034	0.010	

Unaudited Condensed Interim Statement Of Financial Position As At			
	30 September 2023 RO '000	30 September 2022 RO '000	31 December 2022 RO '000
ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	7,592	5,012	5,876
Net investment in finance leases	381,793	354,111	355,763
Working capital and factoring receivables	82,535	69,932	69,689
Advances, prepayments and other receivables	5,149	4,699	4,907
Assets held for sale	1,500	1,500	1,500
Goodwill	5,950	5,950	5,950
Intangible assets	482	709	637
Property, equipment and right-of-use assets	6,427	6,801	6,572
Statutory deposit	250	250	250
Total assets	491,678	448,764	451,144
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY			
LIABILITIES			
Creditors and accruals	13,472	8,874	9,018
Tax liabilities	2,360	1,941	2,364
Bank borrowings	334,885	285,656	287,780
Fixed deposits	36,732	36,162	32,091
Deferred tax liabilities	697	533	697
Provision for employees' end of service benefits	595	589	565
Total liabilities	388,741	333,755	332,515
EQUITY			
Capital and reserves			
Share capital	57,370	54,123	54,123
Share premium	5,786	5,786	5,786
Revaluation reserve	1,017	1,025	1,023
Foreign currency reserve	-	4,321	5,319
Voluntary reserve	3,000	3,000	3,000
Cash flow hedge reserve	828	974	1,273
Legal reserve	10,376	9,363	10,376
Retained earnings	24,560	18,217	19,529
Total shareholders' equity attributable to the equity holders of the company	102,937	96,809	100,429
Perpetual bonds	-	18,200	18,200
Total equity	102,937	115,009	118,629
Total liabilities and equity	491,678	448,764	451,144
Net assets per share (RO)	0.179	0.179	0.186

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests the company in either Arabic or English with 7 days of receipt of the request. The full set of financials are available in the website of Muscat Stock Exchange.



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THURSDAY | NOVEMBER 2 | 2023

3

New fares announced for taxis from hotels, malls

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), which granted licences to a few app-based companies to manage taxi services at commercial centres, hotels and Port Sultan Qaboos, has announced the new fare structure, which will be determined by Aber mobile-taxi meter.

From malls, the starting fare will be 300 baisas and then 130 baisas for every kilometre. Waiting charges will be 50 baisas per minute after 10 minutes.

From Port Sultan Qaboos, starting fare will be RO 1.5 and 250 baisas for every kilometre. Waiting charges will be 50 baisas per minute after 10 minutes.

From hotels, starting fares will be RO 1.5 and 250 baisas every kilometres. Waiting charges after 10 minutes will be 50 baisas per minute.

Marhaba and Oman Taxi will operate from hotels. Oman Taxi, Otaxi, Hala and Tasleem will operate from malls, while Marhaba

Marhaba and Oman Taxi will operate from hotels. Oman Taxi, Otaxi, Hala and Tasleem will operate from malls, while Marhaba will operate from Port Sultan Qaboos

will operate from Port Sultan Qaboos.

The ministry recently implemented the decision to include taxi owners at airports to operate under two app-based operators as part of the efforts in the first phase of its initiative to improve the public transportation system.

The ministry stated that the second phase will cover tourist complexes, hotels, commercial centres and ports beginning from November 1. The third phase will cover white and orange street taxis from January 1, which are currently mandated to operate as per a mobile-based meter called Aber.

MoTCIT recently issued new

rules for practicing taxi activity, based on the Land Transport Law issued by Royal Decree No 10/2016, which also covers the age of taxis.

The ministry stipulated that to practice taxi activity, a light driving licence must be 3 years old from the date of issuance, and the operator's monthly salary must not exceed RO 600 if an employee is in the private sector.

The age must not be less than 21 years and not more than 60 years. One-year extensions can be given based on a medical report from accredited health institutions indicating his ability to drive a taxi.

It is also required that the age of the taxi vehicle must not exceed 7 years from the date of the year of manufacture to carry out operations at airports, ports and hotels while the age of the taxi vehicles should not exceed 10 years from the date of the year of manufacture to practice the activity in the public places and commercial centres.

The ministry stressed the need for everyone to reconcile their situation before September 1, 2024.



From malls, the starting fare will be 300 baisas and then 130 baisas for every kilometre



OMAN CHAIRS GCC UNDER-SECRETARIES MEETING

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday chaired the meeting of the Under-Secretaries of the GCC Ministries of Interior to prepare for the 40th meeting of the Ministers of Interior, which will be held in Muscat. The meeting's agenda included a number of topics reached by the relevant security committees and ways to enhance joint cooperation among the security services in the GCC states. The meeting was chaired by Major General Abdullah bin Ali al Harthy, Assistant Inspector General of Police and Customs for Operations. - **ONA**

Jabal Akhdhar, Nizwa to get mega parks

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, NOV 1

A tender has been floated for the construction of a public park in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in Al Dhakiliyah Governorate.

According to the Tender Board, preference will be given to companies or institutions whose bid includes the largest percentage of Omanisation and possible purchase percentage of national products.

The last date for submitting bids is November 16, 2023.

Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is one of the most popular tourism destinations in Oman, as a number of regional and international tourists flock to explore its pleasant climate, mountain ranges, farms, aflaj, and heritage houses over the weekends and holidays.

The park will include walking and bicycle tracks, a play area, lawns, sitting area,



Al Jabal Al Akhdhar park will include walking and bicycle tracks, a play area, lawns, sitting area, fountains, theatre, a lagoon, bridges, and other utilities

fountains, theatre, a traditional market, a lagoon, bridges, and other utilities.

A tender has been also floated for the construction of Nizwa public park which covers around (170,000.00 sq.m) to create a recreational spot for the community living in and around the area.

Nizwa is an ancient city in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and is known for Nizwa Fort,

and Nizwa Souk which is lined with handicraft stalls and silversmiths working in small shops.'

Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is one of the most popular tourism destinations in Oman, as a number of regional and international tourists flock to explore its pleasant climate, mountain ranges, farms, aflaj, and heritage houses over the weekends and holidays.



Opening of Candidacy Announcement: National Register of External Reviewers for School Evaluation

The Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education is pleased to announce its wish to benefit from the expertise of educators from both the school and higher education sectors, whether inside or outside the Sultanate of Oman, to participate in the school evaluation processes that will be implemented by the Authority. Individuals who believe they are qualified and willing to participate in these processes are encouraged to apply to join the National Register of External Reviewers for the purpose of school evaluation by filling out the attached form in accordance with the conditions stated below:

First: Conditions for those wishing to join the National Register of External Reviewers for the purpose of school evaluation (citizens and residents):

- A) Candidates employed in the government or private sector are required to meet one of the following conditions:
1. Working or have previously worked in one of the following positions:
 - An educational or administrative supervisor
 - A school principal, an assistant principal
 - A senior teacher with a minimum of three years of supervisory experience
 2. Have previous working experience in institutions specialized in ensuring the quality of education and practiced school performance evaluation processes, with at least 3 years of practical experience in the field of quality assurance of education
 3. Working as an academic in one of the higher education institutions recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation, and to have a master's degree in educational sciences as a minimum.
- B) Candidates who are retired or have resigned and are not currently in a permanent employment must meet the conditions stated in Clause (A). This includes having a minimum of (10) years of practical experience in the field of educational work, and their period of interruption from work in the educational field must not exceed (5) years.
- C) Candidates falling under the categories specified in Clause (A) and (B) are required to have at least a bachelor's degree, except for those mentioned in Clause (A), No. 3.

Second: The general conditions that must be met by all applicants to the National Register for School Evaluation from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman:

1. Meet the terms and conditions for joining the National Register of External Reviewers.
2. Submit the application via the attached link, along with an updated copy of the CV.
3. Submit the application within the specified period in the announcement.
4. Proficiency in either Arabic or English, both spoken and written, is required.
5. The candidate should possess an appropriate information technology skill including online/digital communication.
6. The candidate should have the ability to adapt to working conditions of external reviews.
7. The candidate should be fit and healthy.

Third: How to apply:

To apply for the National Register of External Reviewers for school evaluation, interested candidates must fill out the application form through the following link (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PKJLHG>) and attach an updated CV. Applications will be accepted from Wednesday, 2023/11/1 until Thursday, 2023/11/31

Important Notes:

- The candidate will undergo initial technical assessments followed by training courses to determine their suitability to join the register.
- The nomination will be considered void if it is found at any time to be in violation of the terms and conditions for joining the register, or if the information provided discovered to be false.
- Candidates accepted into the National Register of External Reviewers who are currently employed should obtain a no-objection letter from their current employer when participating in any of the evaluation processes the Authority will conduct in the future. These evaluation processes require external reviewers to dedicate their full time for a period of no less than four days and not more than a week during the external review implementation.

For further clarification and inquiries, please contact Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education using the following contact information:

Phone numbers: 24121675 or 24121672

Center email: CSEQA@oaaqa.gov.om



to sign up

Muscat Municipality invites bids for street vendors' project

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 1

Muscat Municipality has put up an announcement for bidding the street vendors project in the Wilayat of Al Seeb in South Mawaleh.

The project will be based at Sultan Qaboos Street, designed to provide necessary services and facilities in one integrated location.

It will include five sites to accommodate 25 stalls, a shaded central plaza area with seating, and a designated area for children's games, bathrooms, lighting, landscaping and basic services (electricity, water).

Apart from developing a system for controls on food safety, the project will reduce traffic congestion in residential areas.



Royal Guard of Oman marks annual day

MUSCAT: The Royal Guard of Oman (RGO) celebrated on Wednesday its annual day, which falls on November 1 every year, under the auspices of Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidi, Minister of Interior.

The ceremony, which was held at the parade field of the RGO Command, included the passing out of new recruits.

The ceremony also included diverse programmes that depict the development and modernisation enjoy by the RGO under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander.

During the ceremony, Sayyid Hamoud presented the top graduates with certificates of excellence.

After that, the graduates chanted the RGO anthem accompanied with a parachute performance by the RGO free jumping team and proclaimed thrice Long Live His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander.

The event was attended by some members of the Royal Family, ministers, commanders of the Sultan's Armed Forces and other military and security units, as well as senior military and civil officials. — ONA



Oman to take part in UN climate change conference in Dubai

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will take part in tasks of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 28), due to be held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) during 30 November till 12 December, 2023.

Oman's participation in this conference under the slogan "Oman is a sustainable future" comes as an extension of its participation with the rest of the world to find practical and sustainable solutions to global environmental problems related to sustainable development. Oman will also review its efforts through the strategies, plans, policies, initiatives and projects that it implements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect environmental and climate systems.

Oman has taken important steps to reach zero carbon neutrality through the Royal directives that set 2050 as the date for this goal, and the establishment of Oman Sustainability Center.

COP28 will address a number of issues related to climate change at the global level, most notably the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from various sources such as industry, transportation, agriculture, energy production, and waste disposal.

It will touch on the financial financing opportunities available



to support these efforts and mitigate the effects of climate change in developing countries.

Meanwhile, The Sultanate of Oman works to strike a balance between environmental, economic and social requirements. It implements principles of sustainable development, taking into consideration the advancement of economic and social aspects and the importance of preserving environmental and climate systems and preserving its natural resources in order to achieve the goals of sustainable development in the various development sectors. Oman is also committed to fulfilling its obligations in international environmental agreements related to climate change, such as the United Nations Framework Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Oman has taken a number of important measures, such as devising and implementing policies, strategies, legislation, and regulations for managing and monitoring climate change to achieve its goal of reaching zero carbon neutrality. — ONA

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousuf

In a recent workshop hosted by the Family Planning Atlas Project, a collaboration between the Directorate General of Primary Healthcare at the Ministry of Health in Oman and the European Parliamentary Forum (EPF), it was revealed that family planning initiatives in the country have achieved significant success over the past three decades. These initiatives have played an important role in reducing the average number of children per family from ten to three.

The workshop at City Seasons Hotel on Wednesday aimed to share and discuss the latest data related to family planning programmes, highlight the Ministry of Health's efforts in this area and explore the strategies to further support the government's family planning goals. It also provided an overview of the Family Planning Atlas by the European Parliamentary Forum team.

Fatma al Hinai, Head of the Women's Health Section at the Ministry of Health, in her comments to the Observer, attributed this achievement to the continuous efforts of the ministry, which has been actively involved in educating and raising awareness among the Omani



The workshop aimed at exploring strategies to further support government's family planning goals

society.

"The average number of children in Omani families today is just 3, a significant reduction from the 1980s when family planning initiatives were in their infancy. This decrease in the fertility rate has been achieved relatively quickly due to a combination of factors, including religious beliefs, individual choices, reduced support from extended family members, and the transition to smaller nuclear families," she said.

Oman has been celebrating October as the Family Planning Campaign Month since 1994. The programme has consistently focused on education and counselling, in addition to providing essential materials to women attending the programme.

The event was attended by Dr Badriya bint Mohsin al

Rashdiyah, Director General of Primary Healthcare at the Ministry of Health, along with senior officials from the Ministry, a senior EPF delegation, and the Organon Country Lead and team.

Razan Gharaibeh, Country Lead for Oman and the UAE at Organon emphasised the importance of improving women's health in Oman and beyond. She stated, "Women are the cornerstone for establishing a healthier world, and we believe that enabling them to access the knowledge and resources required to improve their reproductive health not only benefits communities but also contributes to their strengthening and prosperity." The forum acknowledged the Omani government's unwavering commitment to promoting

women's health, particularly in family planning. High-level participants pledged to support the Ministry of Health's efforts and explore opportunities for cooperation to empower women, enhance their reproductive health, and contribute to the well-being of families.

Jameela al Abri, Personal Health Consultant and Director at the Department of Women and Child Health at the Ministry of Health expressed the vision of providing a better and healthier life for every woman, ultimately benefiting communities regionally and globally.

During the panel discussion, participants emphasised the findings of the Family Planning Atlas, which offers essential information on the status of family planning programmes in Oman. They stressed the importance of collaboration to collect more data that will aid in developing and enhancing future family planning efforts in the country.

Marina Davidashvili, Head of Policy and Research at the European Parliamentary Forum on Reproductive Health, expressed their commitment to supporting family planning programmes in Oman and looked forward to working closely with the Ministry of Health to further understand the situation and make informed decisions.



EU promotes educational exchanges with Oman

MUSCAT: The European Union Delegation to Oman and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation organised an Erasmus+ Information Day in Oman on Wednesday under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation of the Sultanate of Oman. Held at the Arab Open University in Muscat, the event brought together European experts as well as representatives of all the main universities in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Erasmus programme is the world's first large-scale international action to promote mobility of tertiary education students and is funded by the European Union. Since its inception 35 years ago, over 13 million students have benefited from it so far. This programme is

centred around life-long learning that supports education, training, youth and sports in Europe and internationally, including in the Gulf region and has a budget of €26.2 billion for 2021-2027.

Erasmus+ opportunities are now open to the Gulf region with Omani universities able to establish partnerships with their European peers to perform student and staff exchanges. The Erasmus+ Information Day in Oman served as a platform for sharing information on collaborative opportunities with Omani universities and institutions by providing a best practice exchange.

Speaking ahead of the event, the EU Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Oman and Bahrain, Christophe Farnaud said: "The European Union is accelerating international cooperation in the academic field, offering tremendous opportunities

for young Omani students to study and live in the EU. Erasmus+ is designed to enhance two-way exchanges and also enable more Europeans to come to study in the Gulf, further bolstering our people-to-people contacts and our bilateral relations."

On the occasion, Dr Rahma stated, "This Info Day is highly significant as it closely follows the 27th session of the Joint Ministerial Council between the Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Union, held in Muscat from 9-10 October. The Joint Ministerial Council urges the GCC countries and their European counterparts to foster collaboration in the fields of research and innovation in order to create innovative solutions for mutual challenges such as green and digital transformation."

"Enhancing joint collaborative

efforts can be achieved through a number of means, including effective participation in scientific exchange programmes, including Horizon and Erasmus+. Effective participation in Erasmus+ is creating new frontiers and benefits for Oman, including by supporting the country's transformation to a knowledge-based economy and the realisation of many other Oman Vision 2040 objectives. In addition, an increase in the number of international students enrolled in Omani universities as a result of learner mobility associated with the programme is an important consideration in the QS Rankings. This is a particular concern to Oman as Oman Vision 2040 details the goal of having many local universities in the ranking's top 500 by 2040," she added.



The event brought together European experts as well as representatives of all the main universities in the Sultanate of Oman

Under-Secretary engages with students on entrepreneurship



The meeting served as a platform for discussions on investment opportunities and the challenges faced by emerging companies

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, NOV 1

In a meeting to promote investment and engage with the entrepreneurial spirit of Omani youth, Ibtisam bint Ahmed bin Said al Faroojiyah, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion, recently met with students from Majan University College (MUC).

The meeting served as a platform for discussions on investment opportunities and the challenges faced by emerging companies, while also seeking innovative solutions.

At the heart of the discussions were the ministry's strategic plans aimed at facilitating and attracting investments in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

As part of these efforts, the ministry has significantly reduced fees for 28 services offered by the National Intellectual Property Office, with a focus on catering to the needs of students and researchers.

An additional 29 services were made more accessible to small businesses, including patent applications, internal

patent examinations, patent certificates, ownership transfers, assignments, patent renewals, utility model certificates, utility model applications, and industrial design registrations.

The meeting provided a platform for sharing success stories from student-led companies and exploring the critical factors contributing to the sustainability of these companies once students graduate. It emphasised the importance of academic specialisations in the economic and business fields at MUC, underlining their role in fostering a business environment that encourages competitiveness through a clear scientific methodology.

Such specialisations play a pivotal role in the development of leading Omani economic and business enterprises that significantly contribute to the national economy at all levels.

During the meeting, the Under-Secretary underscored the Ministry's commitment to fostering collaborations and programmes that bring together emerging student company owners, higher education institutions, relevant authorities, and experienced professionals.

Oman flays Israeli aggression on Jabalia Camp

FROM PAGE 1

Sayyid Badr expressed his strong denunciation of the Israeli occupation forces' targeting of Jabalia Camp in Gaza Strip, which, he said, led to the death and injury of hundreds of civilians. He urged the Security Council to put an immediate end to the crisis and Israel's inhumane practices against the Palestinian people.

MILITARY ESCALATION

Sayyid Badr also discussed over phone call with Wang Yi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, the danger of continued military escalation, as well as the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and its surroundings.

The two ministers also discussed the menace of the continued Israeli aggressive military operations against unarmed civilians. They underscored the importance of the international community assuming its responsibilities in this regard in implementation of the international law and international humanitarian law.

The two ministers also reiterated the justice of the Palestinian cause and the necessity of lifting the unjust Israeli siege on the Gaza Strip, as well as establishing a humanitarian truce to provide the relief needs for residents of the Gaza Strip.

They stressed the significance of realising a two-state solution to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which was also confirmed by the will of the international community based on the international law. — ONA



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Dhofar Services invites the specialize companies to participate and submit their offers for the below said tender in Dhofar Governorate.

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/2023/161	SH-LOT 02/2023-PHASE- 01	22/11/2023	30/11/2023	RO. 52.500
DISC/2023/162	UNE-LOT 09 C-2023	22/11/2023	30/11/2023	RO. 105
DISC/2023/163	UNE-LOT 09 E-2023	22/11/2023	30/11/2023	RO. 52.500
DISC/2023/164	UNE-LOT 09 F-2023	22/11/2023	30/11/2023	RO. 52.500
DISC/2023/165	UNE-LOT 09 H-2023	22/11/2023	30/11/2023	RO. 105
DISC/2023/166	UNE-LOT 10 B-2023	22/11/2023	30/11/2023	RO. 105

- To view the tender details, you can visit www.dhofarservices.nama.om / scan the QR code
- The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 3.00pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through using "isupplier portal". No hard copies are accepted.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.
- For any clarifications contact us on:
Tel No. 23232563
email: purchase@dhofarservices.nama.om



Dhofar Integrated Services Company s.a.o.c.
CR Number 2185229, J.O. Box 2609
PC 211, Salalah - Sultanate of Oman
Phone Number 23232523, Fax 23201183
www.dhofarservices.nama.om



حدید القمر MISCO تبدیل آرزوها به واقعیت Moon Iron Steel S.A.O.C

Annual Ordinary General Meeting Agenda

The Board of Directors Moon Iron Steel SAOC ("Company") is pleased to invite the shareholders to attend the company's annual ordinary general meeting to be held at **3:00 pm on Sunday 19/11/2023**, via the electronic platform to hold general meetings which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om) if the quorum of the meeting is not completed, a second annual ordinary general meeting will be held at **3:00 pm on Monday 20/11/2023** via the same electronic platform, to discuss the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the board of directors' report on the activities of the company and its financial status for the financial year ended 31/12/2022.
- To consider the Auditor's Report and to approve the Financial Statements (Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Account) of the Company for the financial year ended 31 December 2022.
- Approval of the resignation of the members of the Board of Directors mentioned below:
 - Mr. Munther Nasser Abdullah Al-Mundhiri.
 - Mr. Sanjeev Sharma
 - Mr. Khalid bin Salem bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud Al-Sabah
 - Mr. Salim Qasim Ahmed Al-Zawawi
 - Hilal Hamad Abdullah Al-Hassani
 - Abdullah Hamid Saeed Al-Maamari
- To elect eight board of directors members for to fill Eight vacant seats in the company's board of directors among the shareholders and non-shareholders, anyone who wishes to be nominated for a membership in the Board of Directors must fill in the nomination form which can be obtained from the company, and submit the form after filling it to the company at least two (5) before the meeting of date, (no later than the end of the business day of Monday, 13/11/2023) the company will not accept any application form after that. The candidate must comply with the requirements set for membership in the company's board of directors.
- The appointment of the Auditors for the Company for the financial year ending December 31, 2023, and determine their fee.

According to the Company's Articles of Association and the controls for holding General Meetings using modern technology issued by the capital market authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- Legal persons, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.
- Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

If you have any inquiries, please contact **Hamdan Al Shaqsy**
on phone number: **99422968** or email: hamdanshaqsy@gdunes.com

Auditor

Chairman

Legal Advisor



Israel strikes refugee c

GAZA: An Israeli strike on Gaza’s largest refugee camp killed a massive number of people on Tuesday in an area crowded of civilians.

Large rocket explosions ripped through the densely packed Jabalia camp before nightfall, tearing facades off nearby buildings and leaving a deep, debris-littered crater.

Wails filled the air as hundreds of bystanders and volunteers clawed at concrete blocks and twisted metal looking for survivors.

Horrified resident Ragheb Aqal, 41, likened the explosion to “an earthquake” and spoke of seeing “homes buried under the rubble and body parts and martyrs and wounded in huge numbers”.

Tuesday’s strike is sure to fuel anger at Israel’s prosecution of the war, and the toll on Palestinian civilians.

Gaza’s health ministry denounced the incident as “a heinous Israeli massacre” and said an initial toll of 50 dead and 150 wounded was sure to rise.

The ministry says that in three-plus weeks of Israeli bombing has killed more than 8,796 people in Gaza, two-thirds of them women and children.

Earlier, Bolivia had said it was severing diplomatic ties with Israel as a “repudiation and condemnation” of the Gaza offensive.

And Qatar warned that

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expanded strikes would “undermine mediation and de-escalation efforts”.

Doha hosts several senior officials and is a key channel in trying to secure the release of hostages believed to have been taken on October 7. There is little sign of the conflict abating.

Aid groups and the United Nations warned time is running out for many of the territory’s 2.4 million people denied access to food, water, fuel and medicine.

Surgeons are conducting amputations on hospital floors without anaesthetic, and children are forced to drink salty water, said Jean-Francois Corty, vice-president of Medecins du Monde, which has 20 staff on the ground.

Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has dismissed international calls for a humanitarian ceasefire.

As a result, Israeli security personnel carry out stringent inspections that have slowed the flow of aid to a trickle.

As Israel steps up its assault on Gaza, the families of hostages are struggling with an unbearable wait for news of relatives in Gaza.

“It’s really hell. There are no words to express this,” said Hadas Kalderon as she walked past homes of kibbutz Nir Oz.

“I don’t have any control and knowledge about army actions, I just know my children are still there in the middle of a war,” said the 56-year-old. — AFP



A picture shows smoke rising over buildings in the Gaza Strip during Israeli strikes. – AFP



Palestinians check the destruction in the aftermath of an Israeli strike in the Jabalia camp for Palestinian refugees. – AFP



Palestinians gesture as they check the destruction in the aftermath of an Israeli strike in the Jabalia camp for Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip. – AFP

FOREIGN GAZA EVACUEE

GAZA: A first group of civilian evacuees from Gaza crossed into Egypt under a Qatari-mediated deal on Wednesday while Israeli forces bombed the Palestinian enclave from land, sea and air as they a pressed their offensive against Palestinians.

The evacuees, who had been trapped in Gaza since the start of the war more than three weeks ago, were driven in ambulances through the Rafah border crossing.

Under the deal reached between Egypt, Israel and Palestinian groups, a number of foreign nationals and critically wounded people will be allowed to leave the besieged territory.

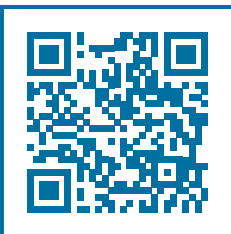
Despite the breakthrough on the humanitarian front, Israeli war planes, naval boats and artillery

AN EGYPTIAN SECURITY
SOURCE HAD SAID EARLIER
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PASSPORT HOLDERS WOULD
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CROSSING ON WEDNESDAY

pounded Gaza throughout the night, inflicting scores more casualties among the civilian population, Palestinian residents said.

Israel sent its forces into Gaza following weeks of air and artillery strikes.

The civilian death toll in Gaza and desperate



camp, killing civilians



JORDAN TO 'IMMEDIATELY' RECALL ISRAEL ENVOY OVER GAZA WAR



Jordanians gather during a protest in support of Palestinians in Gaza, amid the ongoing Israeli strikes, in Amman, Jordan. — Reuters

AMMAN: Jordan on Wednesday said it would "immediately" recall its ambassador to Israel in protest at the war against Palestinians in Gaza.

"Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi decided to immediately recall Jordan's ambassador to Israel," the foreign ministry said in a statement that condemned "the ongoing Israeli war that is killing innocent people in Gaza and causing an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe".

Now in its 26th day, the conflict began as Israel is prompting a devastating military operations that medics in Gaza say has killed more than 8,796 people, two-thirds of them women and children.

The last time Jordan recalled its ambassador to Israel was 2019.

As Israel expanded its strikes and sent in ground troops on Friday, Safadi warned it would result in "a humanitarian catastrophe of epic proportions for years to come" in a post on X. Jordan's population includes more than two million Palestinian refugees.

— AFP

GAZA'S ONLY CANCER HOSPITAL GOES OUT OF SERVICE

DUBAI: The only cancer treatment hospital in the Gaza Strip has gone out of service after it ran out of fuel, health officials said on Wednesday.

The director of the Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Hospital told a press conference that the hospital, which mainly treats cancer patients, had used up its fuel and was now out of service.

"We tell the world don't leave cancer patients to a certain death due to the hospital being out of service," the director, Subhi Skaik, added.

Palestinian Health Minister Mai al Kaila confirmed the director's remarks in a statement, adding that this brings the total number of hospitals not operating right now in the Strip to 16 out of 35.

"The lives of 70 cancer patients inside the hospital are seriously threatened," she said in a statement.

"The number of cancer patients in the Gaza Strip is about 2,000 living in catastrophic health conditions as a result of the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Strip and the displacement of a large number," al Kaila added.

The desperate humanitarian conditions have caused great concern across the world as food, fuel, drinking water and medicine run short and hospitals struggle to treat casualties.

The death toll in Gaza reached 8,796 Palestinians, including 3,648 children, on Wednesday, according to the health ministry in the enclave.

— Reuters

IRAN, TURKIYE CALL FOR MEETING TO AVERT SPREAD OF WAR

ANKARA: Türkiye and Iran on Wednesday called for a regional conference aimed at averting the spread of the Mideast war.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan met counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian a day after Iran's top diplomat met Palestinian leaders in Qatar.

Fidan said Türkiye was pushing for an immediate ceasefire because "it is not difficult to predict that this spiral of violence will grow" without a permanent solution to the war.

"We do not want the human tragedy in Gaza to turn into a war that affects the region's countries," Fidan said.

The Iranian foreign minister "shared with us that there are strong indications that other armed elements in the region may intervene in the conflict if conditions do not change," Fidan said.

"A ceasefire and peace have become more essential."

Amir-Abdollahian said a peace conference involving "Muslim and Arab" countries should be held "as soon as possible".

He also called on the Muslim world to boycott Israeli products because of the war.

Israel has been pounding the Gaza Strip since October 7.

Israeli bombing campaign has killed more than 8,796 people, two-thirds of them women and children, according to the Hamas-run health ministry. — AFP

SAUDI ARABIA CONDEMNS ISRAELI STRIKE ON GAZA CAMP 'IN STRONGEST TERMS'



Palestinians check the destruction aftermath of an Israeli strike in the Jabalia camp for Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip. — AFP

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia on Wednesday roundly condemned a deadly Israeli bombing of Gaza's largest refugee camp that killed dozens of people.

Saudi Arabia denounced the strike "in the strongest terms possible", decriing the "inhumane targeting" of the refugee camp "by the Israeli occupation forces".

The attack, Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry said, had "caused the death and injury of a large number of innocent civilians".

Saudi Arabia had previously warned Israel against any further ground operations in the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, Internet and phone networks were down across the Gaza Strip on Wednesday in the second such blackout in the besieged territory in less than a week.

"To our good people in the beloved country, we are sorry to announce that communications and Internet services have been completely cut off in Gaza," the Palestine Telecommunications Company (Paltel) said on X.

— AFP



Palestinian protesters burn tyres amid clashes with Israeli security forces following a demonstration in West Bank. — AFP

S ARRIVE ON EGYPTIAN SIDE OF RAFAH CROSSING

humanitarian conditions have caused concern across the world as food, fuel, drinking water and medicine run short.

An Egyptian security source had said earlier that up to 500 foreign passport holders would pass through the Rafah crossing on Wednesday. About 200 people were waiting at the Palestinian side of the border, the source said.

A second source said not all were expected to make it out on Wednesday and there was no timeline for how long the crossing would remain open.

A Western official said a list of people with foreign passports who can leave Gaza had been agreed between Israel and Egypt.

Egypt has prepared a field hospital in Sheikh

Zuwayed, medical sources said. Ambulances were waiting at Rafah.

Many countries have called for but which Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected.

Indonesia said it was trying to get out 10 nationals but three of them, volunteers at an Indonesia-run hospital, have decided to stay. The Philippines, Jordan and Italy also said they said they hoped to bring citizens out on Wednesday.

Dozens of Palestinians gathered outside the Nasser Hospital morgue waiting to get the bodies of their relatives for burial.

Inside, bodies lay on the ground being prepared to be shrouded in white after they were cleaned of dust and blood. — Reuters



Evacuees walk at the Rafah border amid the ongoing Israeli strikes on Gaza. — Reuters

Technology in Majlis Ash’shura elections



Ali Al Matani
alimatani2@gmail.com

The Sultanate of Oman has evolved by adopting new technology for Majlis Ash’shura elections for the Tenth Term, as part of a development recognised as the world’s first in this field, and this has been documented by history.

The extraordinary success of the elections, with participation reaching 65 per cent of the 753,000 voters over the age of 21 who have the right to vote, is a big achievement and advancement for the country in the domain of decision-making engagement.

There is no doubt that Oman’s shura experience has witnessed legislative and organisational improvement in terms of quantity and quality in keeping with societal growth on one hand and technical advancement on the other. Also, introducing special applications such as (Intekhab) as a strict and fair means of managing the polls and electronic voting represents an impressive success within the framework of the electronic transformation of all relevant transactions and demonstrates the extent of development witnessed in this aspect.

The high degree of confidence in the nation’s capacities and competent cadre made it possible to use contemporary technologies in the important shura elections this year and in the municipal council elections last year. Without this confidence, it would have been challenging to do so.

The competent national cadre, who successfully leveraged technological advancements, have transformed the once intricate and delicate voting process into one that is incredibly simple and convenient. Furthermore, it is worth noting that all efforts for the elections, including the electoral centres, equipment, and committees of the electoral centres, as well as the expenditure and expenses spent, were dedicated to holding elections in all the governorates. All of this was overcome electronically by the technological advancements of our youth.

Both humanely and conventionally, the elections were a calculated risk. However, the new electronic version solved all the old problems. The young people in charge of the elections focused on addressing the electronic repercussions and how to cope with them, avoiding the traps of network pressure, and safeguarding the servers by creating

THE
INTRODUCTION
OF SPECIAL
APPLICATIONS
FOR CONDUCTING
POLLS REPRESENTS
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SUCCESS WITHIN
THE FRAMEWORK
OF ELECTRONIC
TRANSFORMATION

walls and firewalls to prevent any efforts to hack the (Intekhab) app system.

Perhaps the national triumph made in this area by supplying all of the technological and cyber security criteria contributed to the technical elections succeeding beyond all expectations.

Furthermore, the safety and precision of voting without any human involvement in the voting, counting, and other procedures observed by the elections, as well as the numerous myths spun around them, have all become a thing of the past that will not be repeated.

Indeed, the Omani society’s reaction to technological development in all of its sects and divisions, as well as its assimilation of contemporary technology through electronic voting, is a great achievement. It reflects the society’s adoption of this technology and its use in selecting new members of the Majlis Ash’shura.

There is also a national faith in the value of electronic voting, as seen by the electoral interest observed in comparison to conventional methods, during which the rush and bustle that preceded the election stages vanished.

The world in Gazan clothing

As sorrowful events transpire in Gaza wrapping the entire world in darkness without distinction between day and night, those living in peace and safety away from the events with their daily food secured, yet they cannot be separated from the events however they attempt to seclude themselves from the world. Yet, a single human soul stripped from the right to life without guilt or crime is akin to a black cloud that rains agony, grief, sorrow and melancholy on the whole world.

However, there is a glimmer of hope when we see the entire world, east and west, reacting with Gaza as all of them have agreed on the sanctity of blood, the status of humans, ending the war and protecting civilians and the vulnerable in Gaza. This is similar to when the world and its free peoples were gathered in Gaza which now represents the entire world rather than a limited geographical piece of ground.

Nowadays, there are hundreds of people rallying in support of the Palestinian cause across the globe and not only in the Arab and Islamic countries. The demonstrations have taken a human shape and are taking place in countries that support the Israeli occupation and criminalise all forms of anti-Semitism. We have seen thousands of pro-Palestinian demonstrators in the USA, London, Manchester, Glasgow, Paris, Berlin, Toronto, Sydney, Madrid, Bilbao, Barcelona, Valencia, Vienna, Helsinki, Hassleholm, Mostar, Pristina, Hamilton, Auckland and many more.

The demonstrators are not only Muslims or Arab immigrants but also non-Muslims and even Jews rejecting the genocides committed by Zionism in Gaza and injustice in Palestine. Among them are also Protestant Christians who reject injustice, genocide, and brutality against the people of Palestine and the Gaza. There are also non-Arab advocates of freedom and human rights as well as international humanitarian organisations.

The Palestinian cause is no longer an Arab or Islamic one but rather a humanitarian cause. What is going on in Gaza and Palestine in general is overtly known to the entire world. Previously the media was directed towards certain political goals particularly those wanted by the West. The Western media has, for long years, instilled into the Western mindset, false ideas portraying the Arabs, including

Palestinians, as brutal barbarians. It has propagated that the Jews were subjected to oppression by anti-Semitists despite the fact that Arabs and Muslims had nothing to do with the oppression suffered by the Jews in the middle ages onwards as stated by the Jewish historian Uri Avnery (died 2018) in his Gush Shalom (Peace Bloc): “Every straightforward Jewish who knows the history of his people feels nothing more than gratitude towards Islam which protected the Jews for fifty generations at a time when they were chased by the Christians world who tried many times to force them to alter their faith by the sword.” To present day the Jews coexist in Islamic countries. The Jews maintained a political and scientific standing in eras as early as the Abbasid, Ottoman and others.

If Christians had a negative ideological vision vis-à-vis the Jews, on allegation of the assassination of the Christ, then the situation changed particularly for the Protestant Anglican Christianity some of them opined that accelerating the establishment of the Jewish state was a preamble of the coming of Christ, and also a preparation to the fulfilment of the prophecies of the holy book. This idea was taken from them by the Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses who see that the establishment of a state for the Jews is the fulfilment of the prophecies of glad tidings of the earthly government which is the land of Paradise as God will, after a short time, replace all human governments by His own government and the subjects of this government will enjoy peace. The presence of a heavenly government presided over by Christ followed by the realisation of the glad tidings of an earthly government coupled with the heavenly one along with the overthrow of earthly governments”. This prophecy will be fulfilled in Palestine through the establishment of the Jewish state.

I once wrote an elaborate article in Oman Arabic newspaper about the same topic under the title “Zionism and the State Question from Scientism to Religious Fundamentalism.” The readers can refer to it in order to avoid repetition. Then, when religion was exploited by politicians, secularism disguised itself in a religious attire or vice versa. The Western Catholic Church was dominated by Western political hegemony with a fanatical Protestant orientation in contrast to the Eastern Orthodox Church in general,



Badr al Abri

The writer is interested in rapprochement and understanding.

He is the author of
*The Jurisprudence
of Terrorism*

THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE IS
NO LONGER AN ARAB
OR ISLAMIC ONE BUT RATHER A
HUMANITARIAN CAUSE

many of which remained autonomous like the Coptic and Eastern Churches in general.

However, I do not intend to religionise the topic, otherwise the idea of the Saviour, linking him to bloody conflict, and provoking wars and corruption to expedite his appearance, in the same manner as his appearance was linked to Christ and the land of Palestine or to the sacred things, an idea that is present in the mindset of many religions especially the Abrahamic religions. It is crucial to criticise this attitude because of its negative messages that may affect human societies and hamper the desire to achieve peace in the world and to protect man and individual rights most importantly the right to life. However, exploiting some negative religious literature on the one hand and the absolute interpretation of the religious literature, will lead the world towards more violence, bloodshed, and conflicts.

Nevertheless, I do not see any value in mocking religions in social media posts

nor in putting the religion’s doctrinal or historical opinions in the wrong context and interpreting them in a negative way with false projections. This way only raises tension and worsens congestion. It expands and transforms the conflict from a political conflict dressed in religious clothing into an unneeded sectarian conflict.

We ought to distinguish between policies and faiths. There are right-wing fanatic policies that employ some religious texts and interpretations to justify their political interests and attitudes. Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky said that Talmudic religious vocabulary has been used and is still being used in Israeli politics and is often cited in the Hebrew-speaking Israeli press by the extreme right-wing party. Yet, there are religious and left-wing denominations that reject such projections utilised by extremist politicians around the world.

This is what we are now seeing in the Gaza cause. With some Western policies siding by the occupation, either for political reasons with religious dimensions or due to the Semitic hegemony therein, some peoples have rejected this bias and stood with the blood-saving humanitarian principle which rejects any form of terrorism by any country or religion. We have seen dozens of examples in the cause under consideration from politicians, thinkers, jurists, military personnel, and others as well as the peoples protesting and rejecting this terrorism on the one hand and a double standard on the other hand.

Absolute hostility towards the West is not in the interest of the Palestinian cause in particular as it is not in our interest in general. Some link this negative bias to the Western civilization thereby rejecting it altogether as if the Western civilisation is wholly confined to this negative political angle with populist discourses that tend to generalisation and negative agitation while themselves use Western-produced means and tools to express its opinion. As I mentioned above, what we see today i.e. the awareness of many Westerners of the righteousness of the Palestinian cause is exactly what we should work on as those people have their weight in Western policies whether politically, legally or civilly.

Similarly, it is not in our interest, nor is it in the interest of the Palestinian cause to antagonise religions or different sects within the Islamic religion itself. There

are commonalities that we have to stand with and activate. In the past, scholars of purposes agreed that the second purpose of religions and laws was the preservation of the human soul and this lies in the religious literature. Fundamentally, misfortunes and calamities unite the dissimilar and highlight a single picture that should be taken into account. Nowadays we see that many religious figures are aware of the injustice and killing inflicted on the Palestinian people, hence this common circle between all religions must be expanded owing to the religion’s impact on human society which results in the religiosity of peoples and societies.

Likewise, it doesn’t make sense when some people antagonise their governments using hostile language and absolute hatred with some of them symbolising revolutions aimed at changing the regime as if it takes a push of a button to change the situation in Gaza. Today we live in a complicated world, and if those people were in their place, they would do the same. Since the world today is rife with deadly weapons, it is unreasonable to recall historical wars that were fought with just swords and arrows. Such absolute discourse of antagonism benefits the Israeli occupation. It serves the Israeli interest when the conflict shifts to other countries so that they find an opportune climate for genocides and destruction.

Nonetheless, these governments should have a serious attitude, away from the timid condemnation statements, a unified position that encourages the people to empower their rights and humanity, and to protect their blood, soul, property, and honour. This emergent humanitarian situation should also be taken into account without antagonising others and without exaggerated extravagant ceremonies. We are one nation with feelings and emotions like other human beings and our strength lies in our unified rather than separate self.

What I hope for today and tomorrow, regarding the question: what’s next?, is the exploitation of the global humanitarian attention to the Palestinian cause by peoples, institutions, governments and political, religious and cognitive and cultural figures. It is a very advanced case in favour of the Palestinian cause and other humanitarian causes as the peoples have agreed on the need to pay attention to the Palestinian people and their just and legitimate humanitarian cause.

The blood on their hands...

The eerie silence from many countries towards the condoned genocide happening in Gaza says more than any word. Why the silence or the velvet-toned condemnation of the violence? Humanity is reaching its lowest point towards nature and its own kind.

From extreme weather, the pandemic, regional conflicts, and the rising cost of living, life is becoming unbearable for millions of people around the globe. Man-made tragedies? One can argue one way or another. It is known that complex political, economic, social and military issues characterise conflicts, yet there are too many wars and fights currently happening, and some for too long already.

Conflict and power-grabbing practices sap away people's concentration and focus from other more pressing issues, such as states snatching land or passing new laws or regulations.

The promises from those elected or appointed to look after their citizens' social and economic development disappear to give place to a high level of self-esteem and their logic of unlimited power over people's destinies.

The leaders representing their people's and country's interests enjoy and cherish their status quo and the authority that comes along. They are like little gods that, when they feel threatened, they push for oppression, aggression, or censorship.

Interestingly, and yet factually, it is men who are engaged in violence as ideologists, planners, developers, and the workforce. "The cultures and institutions that prepare for and deliver organised armed violence on behalf of the state or non-state armed groups are predominantly constructed by men, led by men, and filled with men," says Hugo Slim, a researcher at the University of Oxford, on the topic of Masculinity and war – let's talk about it.

Struggles, fights and ethnic cleansing offensives are widespread all over the globe; certain regions have a higher volume of conflicts than others. Discriminatory government policies



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FROM EXTREME WEATHER, THE PANDEMIC, REGIONAL CONFLICTS, AND THE RISING COST OF LIVING, LIFE IS BECOMING UNBEARABLE FOR MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AROUND THE GLOBE

force segments of society to flee their countries or to take action against their governments.

There are currently at least forty-five military conflicts in North Africa and the Middle East. After beginning as a demonstration against the government in March 2011, the bloodshed in Syria has already lasted for 12 years, displacing almost 7 million people. Yemen's civil conflict began nine years ago. The series of ongoing persecutions and killings of the Muslim Rohingya people in Myanmar started in 2016. Their situation had gotten worse after the 9/11 tragedy in the United States due to the so-called 'war on terrorism'. Afghanistan's history is replete with wars and civil wars, including the Soviet-Afghan war, in addition to chronic poverty and natural disasters.

The all-embracing list of conflicts extends beyond the Middle East, where complex alliances may result in a variety of fighting scenarios. In Europe, Russia is warring against Ukraine and holding Crimea in Ukraine at the moment. Other conflicts and people displacements are also occurring in Moldova, Georgia and Armenia. Conflicts are being caused by armed criminal groups in Colombia and Mexico.

One of the worst atrocities in South America is being committed against the indigenous people of Brazil, who are facing numerous challenges to their way of life due to multiple threats, including discrimination and denial of political and economic rights. Still in Brazil, the existence of armed 'militias', in Rio de Janeiro, which is made up of renegade police officers and drug dealers, terrorises the population.

International organisations for peace and conflict studies are either weak or reluctant to settle the cases; lots of talks, meetings and trips are like a chess game between leaders, governments and institutions. Nothing happens! People lose their livelihoods and family members, while those who were supposed to look after their citizens and the country's social and economic development continue enjoying their privileges and authority, never mind the blood on their hands.

PAPER FRUIT!



People walk under an installation of hanging paper fruit at the EmQuartier shopping mall in Bangkok, Thailand, on Wednesday. – AFP

India's smaller rice crop paves way for prolonged export curbs

For the first time in eight years, India's rice output is expected to drop this year, raising the prospect that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government will extend curbs on exports of the grain to keep a lid on food prices ahead of elections.

Production in India, the world's largest rice exporter, is under unusually intense focus after New Delhi banned exports of non-basmati white rice in July, sending global prices surging.

However, the state of the crop is hard to predict following an uneven monsoon. Output could fall as much as 8 per cent from last year's record despite an increase in area under paddy, according to various forecasts.

The weaker output along with persistently high domestic rice prices ahead of five state elections this month and a general election next year have left farmers and traders worried that the government will prolong restrictions on exporting the grain.

Ramkali Bhargav, a farmer in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, said her paddy fields had recovered from an early season dry spell followed by floods. But just before harvesting, heavy rain and winds flattened her rice crop.

"If the rainfall hadn't occurred for another fortnight, our yields



Rajendra Jadhav

The writer is a senior correspondent at Thomson Reuters

PRODUCTION IN INDIA IS UNDER UNUSUALLY INTENSE FOCUS AFTER NEW DELHI BANNED EXPORTS OF NON-BASMATI WHITE RICE IN JULY

could have been at least 30 per cent higher," she said, slicing a sickle through toppled paddy in Chharasi village.

The crop loss is a problem for governments and consumers across Asia and Africa that have struggled to secure supplies of the staple since prices in the global market jumped to a 15-year high after India restricted its rice exports, which account for 40 per cent of global rice trade.

Prolonged export curbs could further inflate food prices given low inventories in other key exporting countries including Thailand, Vietnam, Pakistan and Myanmar.

"With elections looming, the government's hypersensitivity to food prices makes even a slight production dip sufficient to justify maintaining export restrictions," said a New Delhi-based dealer with a global trade house, declining to be named due to company policy.

A senior government official, also declining to be named, said that India does not intend to lift restrictions on any rice grades in the near future.

In the year to June 2023, India produced a record 135.76 million

tonnes of rice.

Two leading global trade houses, both declining to be named, said they expect India's rice output for the current crop year to drop by 7 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively, from the previous year.

B V Krishna Rao, president of the Rice Exporters Association (REA), said he expects a smaller production drop of about 2 per cent to 3 per cent, as heavy rain benefited late-planted crops in some areas even as it damaged fields elsewhere.

The US Department of



A farmer uses a combine harvester to harvest paddy in a field at Haidergarh village, in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India. – Reuters

Agriculture expects a 3-per cent decrease in India's rice output, a decline of around 4 million tonnes, to reach a total of 132 million tonnes for the year ending in June 2024.

India's Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare last week said production from the summer-sown crop could fall 4 per cent to 106.3 million tonnes. It will provide an estimate for total output in its second report, typically published in February.

The soon-to-be planted winter crop is expected to drive a disproportionate share of the

year's decline.

In recent years, production from winter-sown paddy has risen significantly, but this year, output is likely to decline by up to 5 million tonnes or nearly 20 per cent due to lower water levels in reservoirs, said a Kolkata-based exporter, declining to be named due to the sensitivity of crop forecasts.

Water levels in India's main reservoirs were at 71 per cent of capacity in the week to October 26, down from 89 per cent a year ago, government data showed, after a summer monsoon that delivered unevenly spread rains.

Food inflation is highly sensitive in India, where Modi's government has also banned wheat exports, restricted sugar and onion exports, and allowed duty-free imports of pulses in efforts to curb prices.

Despite export restrictions, local rice prices remain almost 15 per cent higher than a year ago.

Meanwhile, India is considering extending a programme that provides free or subsidised cereals to more than 800 million people, with diminishing wheat stocks forcing increasing reliance on rice.

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Al Nasr inch closer to HM Cup semis

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 1

Five-time winners Al Nasr club put one foot in the semifinal of His Majesty's Cup football championship 2023-24 as they recorded a thrilling 2-1 victory over Fanja in the first leg of their quarterfinals on Wednesday. At Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, Al Nasr registered a perfect comeback despite Fanja

taking the lead through a header by Abdullah al Orami for the opening goal. Al Nasr's Filip Akaah equalised before the end of the first half. Waleed al Musallami scored the winner in the 76th minute to deliver crucial triumph for the Salalah-based team. The second leg match will take place on December 1 at Al Saada Stadium. The winner of this match will meet the winner between Al Nahda and Seeb in the semifinal.

Fanja, who are historically one of the most prominent candidates in HM Cup championships, and Al Nasr began the match strongly as they were seeking for a win to get closer to the semifinals. Fanja managed to take the lead in the encounter after a good domination in the first quarter of the match. In the 17th minute, Abdullah al Orami struck the first goal from header after a cross from Basil al Raqadi. Al Orami's

header found the net after a mistake from Al Nasr's defender inside the box. Following the opening goal, Al Nasr pressed hard to find the equaliser. In the 37th minute, Al Nasr players demanded a penalty after their striker was brought down inside the box but referee Yahya al Balushi decided for a free kick near to the box. Filip Akaah's strong shot hit the wall but he grabbed the rebound

and struck home to net the equaliser. The first half ended in a 1-1 draw. The five-time winners continued their good work in the second half as they created more attempts and they were the best side in the game. Waleed al Musallami made the score 2-1 in the 76th minute after he received a perfect pass from Anwar Mubarak. With the triumph, the Salalah-

based team has a better advantage for the return match which is scheduled on December 1 at Al Saada Sports Complex. The remaining matches of quarterfinals will take place on Thursday as Bahla will meet Ibri at Nizwa Sports Complex while Seeb will face Al Nahda at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. Dhofar and Oman Club match was played late on Wednesday at Al Saada Stadium.

WORLD AMATEUR CHESS 2023 BEGINS TODAY

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 1

The participants from around the world have arrived in the Sultanate of Oman to take part in the 2023 World Amateur Chess Championship, which kicks off at 4 pm on Thursday under the auspices of Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary for Culture at Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. The tournament is organised by Oman Chess Committee (OCC) in collaboration with the International Chess Federation Fide and takes place from November 2 to 11 in the main sports hall at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. Many delegations from participating countries arrived on Wednesday, some of which will continue arriving on Thursday morning. For the first time in the history of the championship, a record number of participants totalling 427 players representing 64 different countries are participating in the tournament. The tournament will witness a significant presence of the heads of Fide, Asian, Arab and other international chess federations.



The tournament follows the Swiss system with 9 rounds, with each round lasting 90 minutes with 30 seconds added to each move. The competitions are managed by 19 international referees, headed by Malaysian Abdul Hamid bin Abdul Majeed. The referee committee includes members from Iran, Kazakhstan, Egypt, Iraq, the UAE, Kuwait, and the

Sultanate of Oman, and the committee witnesses a great diversity of experiences and backgrounds. To provide an exceptional experience, cultural and entertainment events will be held on the sidelines of the tournament, including excursions for participants to explore the landmarks of the Sultanate of Oman. These events also include



an international coaching course that coincides with the tournament period. The committee organises daily activities dedicated to schools and children in the morning period to attract about 100 children daily. On Thursday, the OCC in cooperation with the Oman Educational School Sports Association organises the

activities of the School Chess Festival, which targets more than 1,000 male and female students in the first-year classes, representing nine educational directorates of the governorates. The winner of the School Festival will have the honour of representing the Sultanate of Oman in the World School Chess Championship.

PEGULA UPSETS SABALENKA TO REACH SEMIS



CANCUN, Mexico: Jessica Pegula upset Aryna Sabalenka in straight sets at the WTA Finals in Cancun on Tuesday, punishing an error-strewn performance by the world number one to reach the semifinals of the season-ending tournament for the first time.

World number five Pegula, who had beaten Sabalenka only once before in five previous meetings, dominated her out-of-sorts Belarusian opponent from the

outset to claim a 6-4, 6-3 victory.

Pegula was assured of reaching the last four as the winner of Bacalar Group later on Tuesday after fourth seed Elena Rybakina defeated Greece's Maria Sakkari 6-0, 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (7/2) in the day's other game.

"I feel more comfortable playing (top players) this year, I feel more confident," Pegula said after her win.

"I don't think it feels like such

a big deal. Last year when I made top five, I think I psyched myself out a little bit. You have a couple thoughts in your head — do I really belong at that level?"

Sabalenka, who is one of several players who have complained about the condition of the court at this week's tournament, looked uncomfortable throughout against Pegula, finishing with 33 unforced errors and five double faults.

Sabalenka, who can still reach

the last four with a win over Rybakina on Thursday, again bemoaned the state of the playing surface after her defeat, describing it as "like leather."

"You never know what's going to happen, whether the bounce is going to help you or work against you," Sabalenka said.

"I guess today was a day where it didn't work well for me. But it's okay I still have a chance to pass the group, so I'm trying to stay strong."

"I'll do some recovery tonight and just try to analyse what happened today. I'll do everything I can in the next match."

The 25-year-old from Minsk was broken in the fifth game of the first set and Pegula cashed in by holding serve in the next game to open up a 4-2 lead.

Sabalenka blasted a wild forehand wide in the next game to hand Pegula another break and leave her serving for the set at 5-2 up.

Although Sabalenka rallied to break Pegula in the next game before holding to cut the American's lead to 5-4, Pegula made no mistake to wrap up the first set in 39 minutes.

Sabalenka was soon deep in trouble in the second set, going a double break down to trail 4-0.

The game went with serve thereafter and Pegula was soon on the brink of victory at 40-15 and 5-2 up.

But back-to-back double faults by Pegula allowed Sabalenka off the hook, and the Belarusian went on to break to close to 5-3.

Yet any hope of an unlikely comeback ended in the next game, when another erratic service game left Pegula holding three match points at 0-40 up.

Sabalenka fought back to deuce, but was unable to hold, with Pegula closing out victory on her seventh match point. — AFP

Ominvest Group to organise football tourney for public sector

MUSCAT: Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest) will organise a football tournament for the public sector from November 5 to 15.

The Ominvest football tournament is being organised as part of the 53rd National Day's celebrations, and as a part of its belief in the importance of sport in the community development, economic growth, and in maintaining health and fitness.

A number of ministries and government entities will take part in the tournament.

In a statement, Waleed al Yarubi, Chief Risk, Strategy and Governance Officer, said: "The interest in sports and physical activities is considered an essential base for the development of societies and enhancing the performance of workers in various units of the state's administrative apparatus and the private sector companies as well."

"The Ominvest Football Championship reflects the group's vision for developing societies and improving their performance, while the tournament contributes to enhance communication between its participants from various government entities, as it comes in line with the values of the Ominvest Group in strengthening the culture of joint work and cooperation between the public sector and private sector for the advancement of society," Waleed al Yarubi added.



Ten teams will participate in the tournament, divided into two groups, which are: Muscat Group and Sohar Group.

Muscat Group includes, the Environment Authority team, Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs team, Khawla Hospital, Muscat Municipality and the team of Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones.

Sohar Group includes Al Nahda Hospital team, Ministry of Energy and Minerals team, the Cardiac Medicine and Surgery Centre, the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates 'Madayn' and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism team.

The tournament will be held on base of group system, where the first and second of each group will qualify for the final match, which will be held on November 15.

Ominvest is one of the largest listed investment companies in the region.

Founded in 1983, it has been consistently profitable and has an enviable track record of uninterrupted dividend payments to shareholders.

Dollar Car Rental and Weekenders claim victories

MUSCAT: Dollar Car Rental beat OCT Al Amerat by 22 runs on Friday in the G Division League 2023-24 at the Municipality Grounds.

Dollar Car Rental posted 182 in 20 overs courtesy Abdulaziz al Balushi's staggering 73 and Mohammed al Balushi's 41.

In response, OCT Al Amerat could only notch 160 with contribution from Rafeek al Balushi's 43. Mohammed al Balushi bagged 4 wickets in his spell of four overs while Hamza Muhammad and Aniket Gaikwad claim two wickets each.

In the H Division League match at Municipality Grounds, Weekenders thumped Friends XI comfortably by 7 wickets on Friday.

Friends XI crumbled to just 119 with Satisha G scoring

33. Venu Gopinath, Rooswin Anto and Pradeep Ravi bagged two wickets each.

In reply, Weekenders chased down the target with six overs remaining courtesy of Mohasin Moosa's 42 and Rooswin Anto's 41 not out to claim victory by 7 wickets.

BRIEF SCORES

Dollar Car Rental 182/4 in 20 overs (Abdulaziz al Balushi 73 (46b) - 6x4, 3x6); Khalid al Balushi 1/26) beat OCT Al Amerat 160/9 in 20 overs (Rafeek al Balushi 43 (32b) - 6x4; Mohammed al Balushi 4/25) by 22 runs. Friends XI 119/9 in 20 overs (Satisha G 33 (22b) - 5x4; Pradeep Ravi 2/19, Venu Gopinath 2/28) lost to Weekenders 120/3 in 14 overs (Mohasin Moosa 42 (31b) - 7x4, Rooswin Anto 41 (33b) - 5x4; Amit Iqbal 1/22) by 7 wickets.



Mohammed al Balushi and Abdulaziz al Balushi of Dollar Car Rental.

Dimitrov stuns third-seed Medvedev at Paris Masters

PARIS: Daniil Medvedev became the latest high seed to fall at the Paris Masters when he lost to Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov on Wednesday.

After second seed Carlos Alcaraz tumbled against qualifier Roman Safiullin late the previous evening, Medvedev, seeded third, open Wednesday's play at Bercy by losing a marathon to 17th-ranked Dimitrov, 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (7/2).

In a match that lasted two hours and 54 minutes, Medvedev was always chasing.

Dimitrov broke in the sixth game of the match on his way to the first set.

In the second round in Vienna last week, Dimitrov took the first set by the same score but Medvedev won the next two sets comfortably before going on to lose the final.

This time, Medvedev broke in the sixth game of the second set. But Dimitrov fought back, he broke in the ninth game to force a tiebreak which Medvedev edged on his first set point.

In the final set, Dimitrov took the initiative when he broke, again in the sixth game. Medvedev saved four match points before breaking serve in the ninth game. The Russian saved two more match points before holding in his final service game to force a tie-break.

But the Bulgarian raced to a 5-0 lead and, after Medvedev took two points on serve, finished the match.

Dimitrov said he regretted letting a 40-15 lead slip on Medvedev's serve in tenth game.



Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov celebrates after beating Daniil Medvedev on day three of the Paris ATP Masters 1000 tournament at the Accor Arena in Paris on Wednesday. — AFP

"I just didn't go enough for my shots," said Dimitrov. "Against a player like him, he's going to take it, simple as that."

"I thought I played an excellent game with very good shot selection. It slipped there, but a good outcome in the end."

World No 1 Novak Djokovic still has to make his first appearance in the afternoon, against 31st ranked Argentine Tomas Martin Etcheverry.

SAIULLIN STUNS ALCARAZ

On Tuesday, Alcaraz slipped to a shock defeat on his return from injury while Alexander Zverev needed three sets to see off Marton Fucsovics.

Spanish world number two Alcaraz, who was making his return to the court following injuries to his lower back and left foot, had been given a bye in the first round but had no answer to Russian qualifier Roman Safiullin who eased through 6-3, 6-4.

"He didn't surprise me at all because I knew that he has been playing a great level these last few months, beating big guys, reaching finals," said a disconsolate Alcaraz.

"I knew that he was going to play a high level."

The 26-year-old held his nerve under pressure from the Wimbledon champion to serve out for the win, despite facing several deuce points in the final game.

"Even if he's not in the best shape it's tough to beat him," said Safiullin. "So, I'm really happy that I made it."

The German 10th seed Zverev also had his difficulties, having to come back from a set down to beat Hungarian Fucsovics 4-6, 7-5, 6-4 in the round of 64 at Bercy Arena.

"It was just one or two points (that made the difference)," said Zverev.

"He was playing incredibly well and tactically I think he was unbelievable. His slice was effective as I did not know what to do on this surface here. It was a very difficult match, and I am happy to be through. I found my level and I am happy with that." — AFP



DE KOCK, VAN DER DUSSEN TONS HELP SA THRASH NZ

PUNE: Quinton de Kock hit his fourth century of the World Cup while Rassie van der Dussen cracked his second as South Africa thrashed New Zealand by 190 runs on Wednesday to take a step closer to the semifinals.

The Proteas' commanding 357-4 was built on De Kock's 114 and Van der Dussen's 133.

New Zealand, just days from only narrowly falling short chasing 389 in a five-run defeat by Australia, collapsed to 190 all out with more than 14 overs to spare in Pune.

Proteas paceman Marco Jansen finished with 3-31 with left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj claiming 4-46.

Glenn Phillips was last man out for 60 in an innings where no other batsman made more than Will Young's 33.

Victory, which ended South Africa's run of five straight first World Cup defeats by New Zealand since 1999, left the Proteas, bidding for a first one-day international World Cup title, virtually assured of a semifinal spot.

But New Zealand's third loss of the tournament was a blow to their hopes of reaching the last four as they slipped to fourth in the table with eight points, two ahead of Pakistan as well as Afghanistan who have a game in hand.

Earlier, left-handed opener De Kock reached his 21st one-day international ton off 103 balls with eight fours and three sixes.

He brought up his century with a huge six off Jimmy Neesham.

"I'm feeling really good lately. It's nice that everything is coming together at an important time for us," said De Kock, who plans to quit ODI cricket after this tournament, at the innings break.

"I was getting a couple of messages from the bench to bat through. I just want to keep batting, bat for longer. My career is coming down to a finish, I'm trying to bat as much as I can."

De Kock also made 100 against Sri Lanka, 109 in the game with Australia and 174 in the victory over Bangladesh.

He started the day needing just 69 more runs to pass 500 for the tournament when the Proteas were sent in to bat.

Having completed a 62-ball fifty, De Kock broke through the 500-run barrier with a legside boundary off recalled paceman Tim Southee.

He was eventually out for 114 caught by Glenn Phillips off Southee, ending a 200-run partnership for the second wicket.

Van der Dussen kept up the assault as he made 133 off 118 balls with nine fours and five sixes.

It was his second hundred of the tournament after his 108 against Sri Lanka and sixth of his ODI career.

Southee again made the breakthrough, clean bowling Van der Dussen in the 48th over as he tried to launch the ball across the line.

David Miller added a blistering 53 off just 30 balls with four sixes as South Africa ended their innings with Aiden Markram arriving at the wicket for the last ball which he dispatched for six.

New Zealand used seven bowlers after seamer Matt Henry suffered a hamstring injury and was forced off the field midway through his sixth over. — AFP

WORLD CUP STANDINGS

CRICKET WORLD CUP STANDINGS AFTER WEDNESDAY'S MATCH

Team	Played	Won	Lost	Tied	No Result	Points	NRR
South Africa	7	6	1	0	0	12	2.290
India	6	6	0	0	0	12	1.405
Australia	6	4	2	0	0	8	0.970
New Zealand	7	4	3	0	0	8	0.484
Pakistan	7	3	4	0	0	6	-0.024
Afghanistan	6	3	3	0	0	6	-0.718
Sri Lanka	6	2	4	0	0	4	-0.275
Netherlands	6	2	4	0	0	4	-1.277
Bangladesh	7	1	6	0	0	2	-1.446
England	6	1	5	0	0	2	-1.652

NOTE: Top four teams qualify for the semifinals

SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA
Q de Kock c Phillips b Southee 114
T Bavuma c Mitchell b Boult 24
R van der Dussen b Southee 133
D Miller c Mitchell b Neesham 53
H Klaasen not out 15
A Markram not out 6
Extras (lb4, w8) 12
Total (4 wickets, 50 overs) 357
Fall of wickets: 1-38, 2-238, 3-316, 4-351
Bowling: Boult 10-1-49-1, Henry 5.3-0-31-0, Southee 10-0-77-2, Santner 10-0-58-0, Phillips 7-0-52-0, Ravindra 2-0-17-0, Neesham 5.3-0-69-1
NEW ZEALAND
D Conway c Markram b Jansen 2
W Young c de Kock b Coetzee 33

R Ravindra c Coetzee b Jansen 9
D Mitchell c Miller b Maharaj 24
T Latham c Maharaj b Rabada 4
G Phillips c Rabada b Coetzee 60
M Santner b Maharaj 7
T Southee lbw Jansen 7
J Neesham b Maharaj 0
T Boult c Miller b Maharaj 9
M Henry not out 0
Extras (b4, lb1, nb1, w6) 12
Total (all out, 35.3 overs) 167
Fall of wickets: 1-8, 2-45, 3-56, 4-67, 5-90, 6-100, 7-109, 8-110, 9-133
Bowling: Jansen 8-1-31-3, Ngidi 6-1-28-0, Rabada 6-2-16-1, Coetzee 6.3-0-41-2, Maharaj 9-0-46-4
Result: South Africa won by 190 runs

What will be India's approach when Hardik returns?

HARDIK PANDYA who got injured his ankle in the game Bangladesh is set to miss two more games which gives him just one game before that too against Netherlands before the knockout out game in the semifinals. Is that one game enough for him to be match ready before the big semifinal which has been India's biggest hurdle in many World Cups in the past.

Since India have won the games against Bangladesh, New Zealand and England without his contribution with the ball and bat, his absence has gone unnoticed, but India definitely needs Hardik the all-rounder for the big



ANIS SAJAN



games ready and for that he needs to be fully fit from his injury to bowl his 10 overs and also contribute with the bat.

After Hardik got injured India got in a specialist batsman in Surya Kumar Yadav to strengthen the batting and got in Mohammad Shami to ensure they have someone who can give the captain 10 overs with the ball. All this is looking good because India have been winning and winning well.

Shami has been phenomenal with the ball picking 9 wickets and has been making the ball talk with his seam and swing. Surya Kumar too contributed with the bat scoring a crucial 48 in the

game against England where the batting barring Rohit Sharma struggled.

So, whom does India drop when Hardik returns? Do they go back to the same combination of one bowling all-rounder like Ashwin or Shardul and drop Shami? Or do they drop Mohammed Siraj who in this World Cup has looked not at his best and with Shami bowling so well it's unlikely India will drop him.

So, let's presume India drops Siraj, will hardik be able to give them 10 overs with the ball in a knockout game. In case Suryakumar is kept in the side India does have the luxury of a specialist

batsman and will be batting heavy till number 8. This is a big headache Rohit will deal on what he wants in the knockout.

It's a risk Rohit will take, or will he go with the tried and tested method which he used in the first four games. Mind you Pandya has not batted enough in the World Cup so having an extra specialist batsman in Suryakumar makes sense but will be able to give 10 overs to the captain? That's the big call for Rohit to take.

He has two more games to decide till Pandya hopefully returns from injury.

business

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Forum highlights AI's role in fuelling Oman's economic growth



AI Forum organised by Gulf Intelligence on Wednesday.

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, NOV 1

The 'Oman Industry Artificial Intelligence Forum 2023' took place here on November 1, 2023 in a significant move to harness the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for sustainable development. The event, held in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), was organised by Gulf Intelligence (GI).

The forum, graced by the presence of Dr Ali al Shaithani, Under-Secretary for Communications and Information Technology, aimed to champion the role of AI and advanced technology in propelling Oman's economic growth. The forum featured four distinct segments, each delving into diverse aspects of AI and technology.

In the first segment, a welcoming session took place with the participation of Dr Ali al Shaithani and prominent CEOs from various sectors. This session fostered an exchange of ideas and perspectives on the pivotal role of AI in elevating various industries.

The second segment centred on a dialogue about the Ministry's commemoration of the one-year anniversary of the launch of its AI and advanced technologies programme.

Key achievements and advancements in the field over the past year were highlighted.

The third segment scrutinised the role of AI in health, safety, and the environment, emphasising how advanced technology can enhance public safety, health, and behaviour safety.

The fourth segment addressed Oman's prospects in additive AI and explored the primary opportunities and challenges in the technology sector.

Notably, the forum also addressed topics related to economic diversification, capacity building, support for small and medium-sized enterprises, and core sectors. It further considered legislative and regulatory measures designed to bolster the human dimension and steer Oman's economy towards a more technologically-driven future.

The forum also featured professional educational seminars aimed at facilitating the exchange of knowledge and expertise in the field of technology.

This forward-looking initiative underscores Oman's commitment to leveraging artificial intelligence and cutting-edge technology to achieve sustainable development and foster economic growth in the region.

'We are in a triple planetary crisis': ISWA

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, NOV 1

The 39th edition of the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA) Congress concluded yesterday, November 1, 2023, in Muscat under the theme of "Global Action Towards Net-Zero".

The event, which was hosted by Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah), attracted over 300 companies and 1000 delegates from 60 different countries.

Scientific and Technical Committee Chair at ISWA, Björn Appelqvist, stressed the importance of implementing sustainable solid waste management actions in his closing remarks.

"We all have to acknowledge that we are no longer facing a triple planetary crisis. We are in a triple planetary crisis. It's getting real, it's getting serious and we must act upon it."

According to Appelqvist, the conference demonstrated that the world has the necessary tools and technologies for this transition. Additionally, he added that various global developments support this transformation.

"Many significant developments are occurring. The United Nations General Assembly has declared a clean and healthy environment as a fundamental human right.

Treaties are currently being negotiated and implemented. Alliances are forming, and financing mechanisms are falling into place.

Numerous solutions have been tested and presented during this conference. Now is



Be'ah team receiving ISWA Communication Award.



Björn Appelqvist
Scientific and Technical Committee
Chair at ISWA

the time to move from talking to taking action, and it requires the active involvement of everyone."

He emphasised with the importance of implementing a systematic approach to the change, "Now is the time to do it, but we won't get the effect of doing things in a sustainable way. And we won't get a more sustainable waste management system and a transition to a circular economy if we don't

apply a systemic approach to all these actions."

Furthermore, he stressed the need to come together to create change, "So therefore, I would like to call on each and every one of you to join us in this venture, in your professional role, in your organisations as well as you as an individual in your private life.

Because at the end of the day, despite all the mechanisms, all the alliances, all the products, all tools, the tool boxes, it is not as much about waste and circular economy as it is about people coming together to create sustainable and substantial change together."

The three-day event included over 60 breakout sessions and technical workshops, focusing on the different aspects of sustainable waste management including health and environment, climate change, resource efficiency and circular economy and technology adoption.

Additionally, the event included multiple executive panel discussions and focus sessions, award ceremony, and a parallel exhibition.

It was announced yesterday that be'ah received the ISWA 2023 Communication Award for the 'Be Mindful — Ramadhan Campaign', which aimed to promote food waste and plastic pollution awareness during the month of Ramadhan."

General Manager of Corporate Affairs at be'ah, Essam bin Yahya al Sharji, shared the following in regards to the award, "We are profoundly grateful to have been awarded the ISWA 2023 Communication Award for our 'Be Mindful — Ramadhan Campaign'."

This recognition underscores be'ah's steadfast dedication to advancing environmental awareness and responsible waste management. The campaign's success stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment

to forging a cleaner, more sustainable future built by mindful communities, in Oman and beyond."

In an earlier statement, be'ah Chief Executive Officer Tariq al Amri highlighted the significance of Oman hosting the first ISWA Congress in the MENA region, "Oman's selection as the host country for the ISWA World Congress is a significant recognition of its leadership and expertise in waste management. This accolade positions Oman as a hub for waste management innovation.

As the world grapples with pressing waste management challenges, Oman's efforts in hosting this congress serve as an inspiration and catalyst for positive change on a global scale."

It was announced during the conference that the 40th edition of the ISWA Congress will take place in South Africa, marking it the first in the continent.

Plans afoot for EV manufacturing in Duqm SEZ

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 1

More than 400 electric vehicles (EV) are currently in operation in the Sultanate of Oman with authorities weighing new procedures to facilitate direct EV imports international manufacturers, according to a top official of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shamakhi, Under-Secretary at (MoTCIT) for Transport, said a number of initiatives are also being explored for the establishment of EV manufacturing facilities at Duqm SEZ.

He added in comments to ONA that EV charging points, currently numbering around



Charging points for electric cars in Oman.

100 across the Sultanate of Oman, are projected to triple to around 300 within the next two years. Eng Al Shamakhi noted that a list of initiatives has been approved by the relevant authorities to support the widespread adoption of electric cars in Oman.

"There is a steady increase in EV numbers, as a number of agencies have begun selling electric cars, but pricing remains a challenge, while efforts are ongoing to enable new agents to import less expensive, high-quality and safe cars," he said.

These efforts, the Under-

Secretary said, align with Oman's drive to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, stressing that the transportation sector accounts for 18 per cent of the total greenhouse gas emissions in the country.

Around 60 per cent of these emissions come from light cars, while the rest is distributed across heavy cars, trucks, and the maritime transport sector.

If the aviation sector is added, then emissions attributed to the transport sector rise to 25 per cent of the total, he noted.

Stressing Oman's commitment to Paris Climate Change Agreement, he said a delegation will also take part in the COP28 Summit due to take place in the United Arab Emirates at the end of November.

It will highlight national

efforts and initiatives aimed at reducing carbon levels to achieve sustainability towards Oman's sustainable future.

Significantly, the Ministry is also working with the International Maritime Organization to update some regulations to comply with global trends, and work is underway to join the amended agreements in the maritime sector that fall under them to preserve the marine environment and reduce pollution and emissions of harmful gases.

Additionally, the Ministry is studying the potential for establishing a green transit corridor initiative for heavy vehicles and goods linking Sohar Port to the oil concession areas – a proposal that is currently in its early stages, he added.

National Finance celebrates Omani Tree Day, promoting a sustainable future

MUSCAT: As the leading financial company in the Sultanate of Oman, National Finance has enthusiastically established partnerships that demonstrate its commitment to environmental conservation and green initiatives.

In line with this, the company joined Muscat Municipality on the occasion of Omani Tree Day to plant seedlings and foster a sustainable future.

Annually marked on October 31, Omani Tree Day is a cherished national event that promotes the importance of trees and greenery in enhancing the country's beauty and ecological balance. The occasion is a reminder to all to conserve green spaces and preserve rare local flora.

As part of the initiative,



National Finance's staff actively participated in the planting of seedlings with shovels and gardening tools in hand.

National Finance's dedicated staff actively participated in the planting of seedlings, shovels and gardening tools in hand. Their ardent efforts made for a remarkable display of

the company's belief in taking tangible steps to bring about change and positively impact the environment. Commenting on the occasion, Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer, National Finance Company, said, "A hands-on approach makes all the difference is a core belief at National Finance.

We are proud of our employees who took the time to support and work alongside Muscat Municipality to greenify our beloved country.

We believe it is our responsibility to protect our planet so that generations to come may enjoy a sustainable and green future.

Through partnerships such as this, National Finance

reasserts its position as an ally to the environment, and seeks to inspire the community to adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives."

National Finance remains resolute in its commitment to sustainability and has taken concrete steps to align with Oman Vision 2040.

Through the company's 'Imtidad' social responsibility wing, the company aligns its values with the broader aspirations of the community and nation.

Recognising the important role sustainability plays in the country's progress and flourishing, the company has actively engaged in several ventures and partnerships to promote conservation efforts, and reduce its carbon footprint.



Women are among the leading lights of the green energy industry in Oman and across the world.

Key forum to celebrate vital role of women in green energy sector

MUSCAT: In acknowledgment of the increasingly prominent role women are playing in the global green energy industry, an exclusive event, the "Women in Future Energies" dinner forum, will take place on December 11, 2023, at the Kempinski Hotel Muscat. This groundbreaking event, a first-of-its-kind in Oman's green energy landscape, will be a highlight of the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman (GHSO) Conference and Exhibition occurring at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat from December 12 to 15, 2023.

Organised by Birba, Oman's energy-focused event planner, GHSO 2023 enjoys the support of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit. Around 100 women leaders, representing the forefront of the decarbonisation and green energy sectors in Oman and the broader region, will partake in this dinner forum.

An advisory panel oversees the planning of this impactful event, featuring notable figures such as Monica Trench, who leads bp's Hydrogen Business in Oman; Salima al Masrouri, External Communications and Campaigns Manager at Oman Shell; Rumaitha al Busaidy, Business Development Manager at Hydrom; Nuhaila al Rawahi, Diversity and Inclusion Lead at PDO; Dr. Sausan Al Riyami, Director of the Oman Hydrogen Center; Michelle Li, Founder of Clever Carbon; and Vivian Wood, Executive Producer at Birba.

The "Women in Future Energies" forum offers participants the opportunity to network, exchange stories, and share ideas on their involvement in future energy endeavours.

The evening's programme includes two panel discussions that will delve into the presence and impact of women in the renewable energy sector and the opportunities available to them in this rapidly evolving industry.

Omran Group excels at Urban October and First Gulf Housing Week

MUSCAT: Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) proudly highlighted its dedication to sustainability and urban development during Urban October and the First Gulf Housing Week, organised by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

During an awards ceremony held in conjunction with the event, The Sustainable City - Yiti Project, a pinnacle of Omran Group's commitment to sustainability, was honoured with the prestigious GCC Housing Award.

This significant recognition reflects the project's innovative sustainable solutions, effective management across economic, environmental, and social spheres, and its role in setting global benchmarks for sustainable development. Mohammed bin Khamis al Ghufaili, Omran Group's Chief Operating Officer, graciously accepted the award on behalf of the Group.

Eng Ammar bin Sulaiman al Kharusi, Omran Group's Head of Development, further underscored the Group's commitment to sustainable urban development in his presentation.

He highlighted the Yiti

Integrated Tourism Development as a testament to the Group's mission of crafting modern communities, fostering significant investments, and developing innovative tourism destinations in alignment with Oman Vision 2040 and the National Tourism Strategy.

The Sustainable City - Yiti Project, spanning over a million square meters in the picturesque Muscat Governorate, stands as a holistic community that epitomises sustainable urban development.

With its adoption of innovative solutions for energy production, recycling, water management, and sustainable transportation, the project aligns with the goals of achieving carbon neutrality by 2040, pursuant to the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Moreover, the project highlighted its objectives and sustainable practices during the Gulf Housing Week exhibition, providing insights into its reliance on renewable energy sources, commitment to promoting a healthy lifestyle, and dedication to maximising local value while fostering innovation.



'Drive Geely with unbeatable price offer' launched in Oman

MUSCAT: Now is the perfect time for customers to gift themselves the latest Geely car models in Oman and get the benefits of some very exciting offers.

Geely launches its 'Drive Geely with unbeatable price offer' with a range of attractive benefits on the entire Geely range.

With prices within easy reach, now is the time to own your favourite Geely. This is simply the best available offer in this entire year, with the lowest price ever on Emgrand, making it a season to rejoice.

The all-new Emgrand starting from RO 4599 and EMI from RO 53 only (lowest ever price), all-new 2024 Coolray, starting from RO 5999 only and an EMI starting from RO 69, all-new Azkarra, starting from RO 7649 and an EMI starting from RO 88, all-new Okavango starting from RO 7899 and an EMI starting from RO 91(conditions apply).

What's more, customers can avail of free 3 years / 30000 kms service (whichever comes earlier only on

Azkarra and Okavango), free 3 years AAA road side assistance and 5 years (whichever comes earlier) manufacturer warranty.

The offer is valid from September 25 to December 24, 2023. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year.

Conditions apply. Visit Geely showroom for exact details).

Geely cars have gained immense popularity worldwide. Now customers can visit their nearest Geely showroom for a test drive.

All-new Emgrand:

BMA-based sedan The all-new Emgrand sedan is a stylish and affordable car that exceeds all expectations.

A visually stunning sedan, it is crafted using the B-segment modular architecture (BMA) and is engineered to exceed the 5-star NCAP safety ratings. Its 1.5-litre engine offers excellent performance and fuel efficiency.

Key features include a 17-inch

alloy wheel size, special suede imitation leather seats, 6-way electric adjustment for the driver's comfort, and a sunroof for added style.

Its advanced safety and technical features such as ABS with EBD, electronic stability programme, traction control, uphill auxiliary control, electric parking brake with auto hold, six airbags, and intelligent seating monitoring system are sure to assure customers of a safe ride.

All-new 2024 Coolray:

Elevate your drive The all-new 2024 Coolray is a car that combines advanced safety features, stylish design, and a wealth of cutting-edge technology. With intelligent cruise control, blind spot detection, and lane departure warning, the Coolray prioritises driver and passenger safety.

Its sleek and sporty exterior, featuring a unique grille, spoiler, rear quad exhaust, and a powerful 1.5 turbo engine, exudes energy and dynamism.

NBO highlights SIP as a path to financial success

MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) is pleased to highlight its Systematic Investment Plan (SIP), a trusted financial product that has been enabling customers to work towards their long-term financial goals since its launch in 2019.

The SIP is an innovative investment approach that enables individuals to invest small, fixed amounts at a specified frequency, typically monthly, into a pre-defined market portfolio.

This investment vehicle has been instrumental in helping investors fulfil their financial aspirations, such as retirement planning, funding their child's

education or building their dream home.

Ali bin Mustafa al Lawati (pictured), Assistant General Manager and Head of Private Banking and Segments at NBO, stated, "At NBO, our commitment is to secure the financial future of our customers. Through our Systematic Investment Plan (SIP), we provide a dependable and accessible route to long-term financial security and peace of mind.

SIP is a strategic product that helps realise the customers financial goals in the long run."

The innovative investment solution offered by NBO



Ali Mustafa al Lawati, Assistant General Manager and Head of Private Banking and Segments at NBO

is committed to assisting individuals in charting their course toward financial prosperity by motivating them to steadily accumulate wealth over time.

It offers a reliable means of building assets for the long term and securing their financial future.

Furthermore, the SIP enables individuals to take control of their financial future, with the option of investing as little as RO 100 per month from their paychecks. With the guidance of NBO's dedicated investment team, investors can trust the bank to be their partner on the journey toward securing

their dreams.

NBO's Systematic Investment Plan offers multitude of advantages to investors. SIP eliminates the need for substantial lump-sum investments.

These contributions are systematically allocated to specified securities, creating a portfolio that steadily grows over time.

SIP takes a strategic approach, ensuring that investors receive a proportional number of units corresponding to the current Net Asset Value (NAV) with each contribution.

This safeguards against market volatility through a robust dollar-

cost averaging strategy.

By acquiring more units when prices are low and fewer units when prices are high, investors can anticipate a lower average cost per unit in the long run if the markets are trending higher.

Moreover, SIP encourages disciplined investment whilst remaining flexible, permitting investors to pause contributions according to their needs.

To know more about National Bank of Oman's Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) and how it can help you achieve your financial goals, please visit www.nbo.om, visit any branch or contact the Call Centre on 24770000.



Oman's OQ8 eyes capacity growth and product diversification

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT, NOV 1

In the lead-up to the commercial launch of Duqm Refinery, scheduled to take place before the end of this year, Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries Company (OQ8) has revealed plans to unlock opportunities to support the further growth of this landmark project in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

Those opportunities centre around capacity expansion and product diversification, according to top official of OQ8, a joint venture of OQ Group of the Sultanate of Oman and Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI).

David Bird, CEO – OQ8, said in a recent post that the JV is boldly pursuing “opportunities

for expansion and downstream applications.”

“We have identified several such opportunities that capitalise on Duqm’s unique strategic location in proximity to major international shipping lines, leverages our extensive expertise in processing fuels and petrochemical products, and relies on OQ8’s team of leading industry experts,” said the CEO.

“These new and promising opportunities, both capacity growth opportunities, but also product diversification such as bunkering (including military fuels), bitumen production, lubricants, process and transformer oils, etc. will create significant value for all our stakeholders,” he further noted.

Reflecting on OQ8’s recent participation in the 1st Duqm



David Bird, CEO – OQ8

Economic Forum as a Gold Sponsor, Bird underscored the JV’s contribution to positioning Duqm as a “pivotal gateway for businesses accessing international markets”.

Given its proximity to the vast markets of the Indian subcontinent, East Africa and Asia, Duqm can play a vital role in facilitating trade and investment, he noted.

In his reflections, the CEO also underlined Duqm’s promising investment appeal once green energy becomes available in abundance in the hinterland.

“Bringing energy intensive industry to Duqm, adjacent to Duqm’s easily accessible renewable energy sources streamlines the path to decarbonisation while sidestepping logistical challenges of green energy export,” he said.

“Coupled with Duqm’s attractive investment climate as a free-trade zone to attract energy-intensive industries, the region is optimally positioned to cement its position as a forward-thinking, eco-conscious hub on the global stage, significantly contributing to broader decarbonisation initiatives. As worldwide trends increasingly favour lower carbon-intensive energy, this transition

presents vast opportunities for the region’s industries to lead in decarbonisation and promote sustainability,” Bird stated further.

Commenting on Duqm Refinery’s imminent commercial launch, Bird noted that the approaching milestone will bolster Duqm’s status as a “critical source of high-quality oil products”, including naphtha, jet fuel, LPG and diesel.

In August, OQ8 had announced the maiden export of naphtha from the refinery – the result of trial operations that had commenced earlier in the year. Crude oil as feedstock for the refinery, sourced from both Oman and Kuwait, has also been arriving at the Ras Markaz Storage Terminal near Duqm, and pumped to the refinery via an 80km pipeline.

Key forum on Intellectual Property and Competition Protection concludes



Giovanni Napolitano, Head of the Intellectual Property and Competition Department at WIPO, receives a certificate of appreciation.

NASRULAH AL AJMI

MUSCAT, NOV 1

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), in partnership with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), recently wrapped up a groundbreaking three-day workshop dedicated to intellectual property and competition protection.

The event, which commenced on Monday, October 30, 2023, marked WIPO’s inaugural foray into the Arab region and saw the presence of distinguished figures, including Dr. Saleh bin Said Masan, Commerce and Industry Under-Secretary at MoCIIP.

The primary objective of the workshop was to emphasize the critical importance of preserving fair competition and preventing monopolistic practices. It aimed to leverage international expertise to enhance the knowledge and professional standards of all participants.

Oman’s commitment to regulating economic activities and promoting market principles that ensure price freedom without stifling free competition is exemplified by the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Law enacted under Royal Decree 67/2014.

The comprehensive agenda of the workshop delved into a wide range of pivotal topics, providing participants with practical insights and actionable takeaways. It drew on WIPO’s extensive knowledge base while sharing Egypt’s valuable experiences in assessing non-competitive agreements.

The program placed a strong emphasis on intellectual property, assessing market dominance, complaint resolution procedures, and the evaluation of economic concentrations. Furthermore, it explored the intricate intersection of intellectual property and competition, with specific relevance to the pharmaceutical and digital platform industries.

The workshop also shed light on the enforcement of competition law.

Nasra al Habsi, Assistant General Manager of the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre at MoCIIP, outlined the center’s overarching objectives and responsibilities, including the regulation of economic activities, the establishment of equitable market rules, and ensuring price freedom without inhibiting fair competition.

The centre plays a crucial role in enforcing laws and regulations related to competition protection and monopoly prevention, actively researching harmful competition practices, and managing complaints related to anti-competitive conduct.

Rana Khoweiled, the Head of the Mergers and Acquisitions Department at the Egyptian Competition Authority, stressed the importance of competition protection and monopoly prevention laws within the broader economy. She highlighted the workshop as a significant part of ongoing cooperation between Oman and Egypt across diverse fields.

Transforming Oman’s public transportation sector: A vision for a sustainable future

JOMAR MENDOZA

MUSCAT, NOV 1

From the heart of Oman’s bustling transportation industry emerges a pioneering force, Mwasalat. In an exclusive interview with Badar bin Mohammed al Nadabi, the Chief Executive Officer of Mwasalat, the *Observer* gained valuable insights into the challenges and successes of the company, which is at the forefront of transforming Oman’s transportation industry.

From the collective efforts of all the employees — from the present and former company leaders, to the drivers and technicians — Mwasalat has emerged as a pioneering force in modernising the transportation industry while focusing on customer satisfaction, sustainability, and technological advancements.

For his part, with his wealth of experience and a passion for reshaping public service, Al Nadabi shed light on the pivotal role Mwasalat plays in modernising Oman’s public transportation system.

Al Nadabi shared his motivations for entering the transportation sector, citing the opportunity to be part of the transformation of public service as a driving force behind his decision.

In 2016, he joined Mwasalat as General Manager for corporate support, tasked with leading the implementation of the Oman National Transport Strategy.

Al Nadabi recognised the challenges involved in managing a dynamic sector serving multiple stakeholders with high expectations.

However, he seized the unique opportunity to shape the future of public transportation in Oman, hence in November 2019, he became the Chief Executive Officer of Mwasalat.

One of Mwasalat’s primary contributions to Oman’s public transportation system has been its unwavering focus on infrastructure development.

Al Nadabi highlighted the extensive efforts undertaken



A Mwasalat bus is seen (left), with the same amount of people with their cars, in this illustration image.

to build a robust network of bus stops, coordinating closely with stakeholders such as Municipalities, the Royal Oman Police, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, and others.

Within a span of five years, Mwasalat successfully established over 1,200 bus stops across the country, laying the foundation for enhanced accessibility and connectivity for passengers.

The transformation extended beyond infrastructure to the selection and integration of top-notch buses from global markets.

Mwasalat carefully procured technologically advanced and luxurious buses that met both the strategic objectives and community expectations.

With the introduction of an Intelligent Transport System (ITS) in 2019, Mwasalat solidified its commitment to leveraging technology as the backbone of all services.

Through the ITS system, passengers now benefit from real-time bus tracking, access to service information, and improved on-time reliability.

While Mwasalat’s infrastructure developments continue, it is

equally dedicated to ensuring high-quality service through various strategies and practices.

Safety remains a top priority, with significant investment in driver training programmes to instill a culture of responsibility and accountability. Regular assessments and compliance with evolving standards further ensure the delivery of safe and reliable services.

To enhance customer satisfaction, Mwasalat actively engages with the community through surveys and feedback mechanisms.

By placing a strong focus on understanding passenger expectations, Mwasalat adapts its services to cater to the unique needs of different segments.

For example, they have introduced free pass ticketing options for students and incentivised frequent users with a rewards programme, encouraging commuters to rely on public transportation as their primary mode of travel.

The interview also touched upon Mwasalat’s plans for future expansion. Al Nadabi outlined a three-phase public transport

master plan, aiming to gradually expand their network to cover various cities and governorates in Oman.

While the first phase focused on infrastructure development in Muscat and select areas, the subsequent phases will involve expanding services to other cities, prioritising economic, social, and environmental factors.

He expressed confidence in constantly identifying and meeting the demands of an evolving demographic. In terms of demographics, Al Nadabi highlighted the diverse passenger base served by Mwasalat.

While Omanis constitute a significant portion of the ridership, expatriates, students, and other segments also rely on public transportation.

Mwasalat has implemented innovative incentives to attract and retain different demographics, especially the younger generation to view the public transportation as a reliable and convenient option for commuting.

The CEO reiterated that the journey towards transforming public transportation in Oman is an ongoing effort that requires

collaborative involvement from all stakeholders.

The challenging times brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic did impact ridership, but Mwasalat remains determined to recover and continue its growth trajectory.

With a focus on sustainability, customer satisfaction, and technological advancements, Mwasalat aims to transport 1.6 million passengers daily by 2050 while achieving zero carbon emissions.

Al Nadabi’s leadership and Mwasalat’s commitment to excellence have played a pivotal role in revolutionising Oman’s public transportation system.

Their unwavering dedication to improving infrastructure, ensuring high-quality services, and embracing technological advancements are propelling Oman towards a future where public transportation becomes the preferred mode of commuting for all its citizens and residents.

As Mwasalat continues to chart its course towards success, the transformative impact on the nation’s transport landscape is set to be felt for many years to come.



Safety remains our top priority, with significant investment in driver training programmes to instill a culture of responsibility and accountability.

BADAR AL NADABI

CEO, Mwasalat

Why suitably trained financial managers are key to the success of SMEs



HAIDER AL LAWATI
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The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for the CBO and OCCI

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry shows great interest in the issue of qualifying, training and educating the owners of small and medium-sized institutions through organising administrative, financial and technical programmes. Such training helps them to develop the work of these institutions and increase their annual income and production.

These programmes are not limited to a specific economic sector, but rather they include all important sectors, and presented in both languages Arabic and English.

Recently, the Chamber launched the ‘Financial Directors’ programme through its branches. Dr Abdullah bin Masoud al Harthy, Board Member

Chairman of the Programme’s Supervisory Committee, believes that the programme, which was crafted in cooperation with the Institute of Certified Public Accountants in India, aims to develop owners of small and medium enterprises and workers in the private sector to improve human resources and contribute to achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The programme aims to introduce participants to the backgrounds of companies, their financial policies in the short and long term, and how to diversify their sources of income.

It also deals with the necessity of knowing financial statements and important procedures for financial markets, and how to distribute profits and rewards through understanding procedures for revenues, expenses

and capital expenditures, besides improving operations management and cost control for projects.

As is well-known, many small and medium-sized companies rely on internal funds or cash from friends and family members to launch and manage their projects from the beginning.

They try as much as possible to avoid bank loans that often burden them.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) estimates that 65 million companies, or 40 per cent of formal micro, small and medium enterprises in developing countries, have financing needs estimated at more than \$5.2 trillion in various countries of the world. Half of these enterprises cannot access formal credit, while their financing gap is widening, which requires owners to know

more about the principles that benefit them in how to manage their financial matters.

Many financial responsibilities fall on the financial director of institutions and companies, who is considered the first person to manage the company’s funds effectively and honestly.

They play an essential role in decision-making and are responsible for studying and analysing financial data that helps companies understand the financial and operational reality of the company.

The latest programme of the OCCI is part of the initiatives and services provided by the Chamber to private sector institutions, entrepreneurs and members with the aim of raising the level of capabilities of workers in these enterprises, improving leadership matters and the business

environment for them.

It is enhancing the standards that qualify them to support their projects with competencies working in the accounting profession, the financial and legal system and management.

Participants in the CFO programme believe that such initiatives represent an important step by the OCCI to enable workers in institutions and companies to learn the necessary tools and knowledge in the field of accounting, examine and analyse companies’ businesses and their financial and accounting matters.

It aims of building a sustainable financial future for them, developing and strengthening leadership and financial support in addition to its contribution to advancing the country’s economic development process.

Women’s economics goes mainstream

William Shakespeare’s 1597 comedy Love’s Labour’s

Lost tells the story of four Frenchmen as they navigate the tension between commitment to intellectual development and the quest for domestic bliss.

Some four centuries later, Harvard economist Claudia Goldin reimagined the tale from the vantage point of American women balancing career and family. Now, Goldin’s profound insights into women’s labour-market outcomes have won her a Nobel Prize in Economics.

Goldin’s achievement is notable not only because she works in an overwhelmingly male-dominated discipline – she is only the third woman in history to win the economics Nobel, and the first to win it solo – but also because her scholarship focuses squarely on gender.

The issues Goldin researches – women’s labour force participation and, specifically, the gender pay gap – are typically siloed within feminist economics and marginalised in the field.

Goldin, who positions herself as an “economist-detective”, has cracked a number of cases, but as the Nobel Committee noted, three stand out.

First, most theories of economic development assumed that, as economies grew, women would automatically and frictionlessly be pulled into the workforce. But Goldin’s research shows that female labour-force participation over time follows a U-shaped curve.

Meticulously combing 200 years’ worth of data, Goldin observed that as the locus of economic activity moves from agriculture to industry, female labour-force participation falls, owing largely to the challenge of balancing childcare with factory work, especially for married women. But once the service sector gains dominance, women join the workforce at much higher rates.

Second, the gender pay gap – women on average make 77 US cents for every dollar earned by men – has traditionally been



ANTARA HALDAR

The author, Associate Professor of Empirical Legal Studies at the University of Cambridge, is a visiting faculty member at Harvard University and the principal investigator on a European Research Council grant on law and cognition.

ISSUES LIKE WOMEN’S LABOUR-FORCE PARTICIPATION AND, SPECIFICALLY, THE GENDER PAY GAP HAVE LONG BEEN MARGINALISED WITHIN ECONOMICS. HARVARD ECONOMIST CLAUDIA GOLDIN’S SCHOLARSHIP – WHICH HAS NOW WON HER A NOBEL PRIZE – HAS PUT THESE CONCERNS WHERE THEY BELONG: AT THE CENTRE OF THE DISCIPLINE.



A female employee works inside a garment factory in India, in this illustration photo. – Reuters

attributed to myriad factors, from educational attainment to differences in ambition. Some claim that it is a matter of aptitude: former US Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers, for example, argued in 2005 that men are biologically better suited to math and science.

But, by examining differences in pay within the same occupation, Goldin showed that the actual explanation is much simpler. As it turns out, the ongoing lag cannot be attributed to educational attainment; in rich countries, women have overtaken men on this front. And since the pay gap exists within professions, it cannot be attributed to women’s higher representation in less lucrative fields.

Nor can cognitive ability be the problem, given that pay for men and women is almost identical at university graduation.

Rather, women earn less than men due to the brute biological fact of childbirth. The pay gap starts to emerge a year or two after the birth of a woman’s first child. By age 45, women earn 55 per cent what men do, owing to childbirth-related factors like career interruptions and reductions in working hours.



Claudia Goldin awarded Nobel Economics Prize 2023 for groundbreaking work on women’s labour market outcomes.

Third, Goldin’s research establishes that women’s expectations of their prospects matter. Because of the “demonstration effect” – that is, the example set by their mothers and grandmothers – they long sold themselves short professionally. This began to change in the US in the 1970s, with rising investment in female education and delays in marriage and childbirth.

In a working paper published on the morning of her Nobel win, Goldin highlights a series of developments between 1963 and 1973 that laid the groundwork for this shift. These include the passage of the Equal Pay Act, Roe v. Wade (when the US Supreme Court recognised a constitutional

right to abortion), an increase in Ivy League admissions for women, and, especially, access to oral contraceptives.

Goldin’s scholarship holds a number of important lessons for economics. It illustrates the centrality of history to understanding today’s economic realities – a fitting tribute to Goldin’s mentor and fellow Nobel laureate Robert Fogel. There are persistent problems and inefficiencies that markets have failed to solve, even over the course of centuries. Why are women still paying such a high price for providing children, a public good par excellence?

Goldin’s scholarship also demonstrates the need to disaggregate economic agents, because outcomes often reflect self-fulfilling prophecies based on identity, social structures, and subjective perceptions.

For example, as Goldin explains, most similarly educated straight couples do not split domestic duties evenly, because the male partner typically earns more. But this reinforces the pay differential. Most radically, Goldin’s work shows that economics inhabits not only formal institutional spaces, but

also intimate ones. The discipline should be as concerned with marriage markets as it is with financial markets.

The bedroom is no less relevant than the boardroom. Ideas that have long been addressed in women’s magazines belong in economic journals.

Goldin’s work underscores a point that feminists have long emphasised: women do not have the luxury of separating the personal from the professional. Economics cannot afford to ignore the reality that for women, domestic bliss comes with a price tag attached, in terms of both income and independence.

From a policy perspective, we have two options. We can reimagine marriage and child-rearing to ensure that women can compete in an economic system built for men, such as by introducing workplace childcare and making use of tax incentives. Or, as Goldin advocates, we can reimagine the economy so that it works for women, making it more flexible, less “greedy” and more focused on empathy.

If we do nothing, however, love’s labour will continue to be women’s loss.

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FOOD SCENE

Canadian dancer Christian Millette walks the runway during the parade of chocolate dresses during the Salon du Chocolat de Paris 2023 in Paris. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

Bollywood actor Arjun Kapoor walks the ramp for the launch of the 'Jio World Plaza' mall in Mumbai. — AFP



CULTURE

A character performs during the most giant Halloween party in Hungary at Cinemaqua Filmpark, in Kisvarda. More than 300 horror movie characters can be found here within original movie sets during the 8th Night of Horrors, so called the 'Nightmare night'. — AFP



FASHION

A model parades an outfit by student designer Casey Quick in the Student Collections Runway during the Melbourne Fashion Week, in Melbourne. — AFP



MUSEUM

The original "Lady of Ampato" Mummy, known as Momia Juanita, lays in a controlled environment under several layers of plexiglass at the Andean Sanctuary Museum in the city of Arequipa, in southern Peru. — AFP

art & life

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The relevance of Muscat Art and its commentary on pressing issues

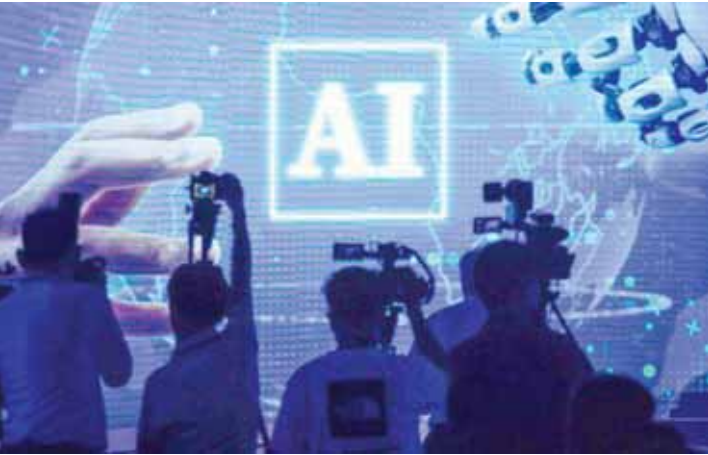
For three days, Muscat Art 2023 featured diverse artworks by local and international artists, uniting creativity and cultural consciousness. Beyond being a platform for artists and art lovers together, this years edition also extended awareness about the plight of Palestinians in Gaza... P20

TRENDING

AI named word of the year by Collins Dictionary

THE ABBREVIATION OF artificial intelligence (AI) has been named the Collins Word of the Year 2023. The dictionary said AI, which it said means the "modelling of human mental functions by computer programs", has become the dominant conversation of 2023. Text generator ChatGPT was launched in November 2022 and there has been much debate about the use of the technology. Lexicographers at Collins Dictionary put AI at the top of the list after looking at media

sources, including social content, because the term has "accelerated at such a fast pace". Alex Beecroft, managing director of Collins, said: "We know that AI has been a big focus this year in the way that it has developed and has quickly become as ubiquitous and embedded in our lives as e-mail, streaming or any other once futuristic, now everyday technology." "Use of the word as monitored through our Collins Corpus is always interesting and there was no question that this has also been the talking point of 2023." Other words on Collins list include "nepo baby", which has become a popular phrase to describe the children of celebrities who have succeeded in industries similar to those of their parents, and "debanking" or depriving people of banking facilities. Former Ukip leader Nigel Farage hit the headlines when he said his Coutts account had been shut down by NatWest Group because his political beliefs did not align with the bank. A report by law firm Travers Smith showed "serious failings" in the bank's treatment of him but also said Farage's accounts being unprofitable was the principle reason for the decision.



Oscar-winning actress Jamie Lee Curtis, the daughter of Janet Leigh and Tony Curtis, and singer Noel Gallagher, the father of model Anais Gallagher, have both spoken about the nepo baby debate. Gallagher told Radio X it is "human to help your children" while Curtis said after accepting a Screen Actors Guild (SAG) award for her role in "Everything Everywhere All At

Once" that people may "think, well, nepo baby", but this is "amazing" personally. Also on the list of key words is "ultraprocessed" or "ultra-processed" food and "semaglutide", a medication used to control appetite. Sold under the brand names Wegovy, Ozempic and Rybelsus, former UK prime minister Boris Johnson referred to the drug in his first Daily Mail column in June. Beecroft also said: "The cost-of-living crisis is also inescapable, with words like greedflation rising sharply, shining a spotlight on corporates." "Other words in the list have also provoked interesting conversations, particularly around people's health, with ultra-pro-

cessed coming into the attention of the media and semaglutide also making headlines." Social media terms such as "deinfluencing" or "de-influencing", meaning to "warn followers to avoid certain commercial products" and the TikTok trend of calling character forming experiences "canon events" are also on the Collins list. "Greedflation", meaning companies pushing up the cost of goods to make a profit, and "Ulez", or the ultra-low emission zone in London, were also mentioned. This summer's Ashes series between England and Australia had many people talking about a style of cricket dubbed "Bazball", according to Collins. The term refers to New Zealand cricketer and coach Brendon McCullum, known as Baz, who has a philosophy of relaxed minds, aggressive tactics and positive vibes. The lexicographers at Collins Dictionary monitor their 18-billion-word database to create the annual list of new and notable words that reflect our ever-evolving language and the preoccupations of those who use it. Last year they chose permacrisis, defined as "an extended period of instability and insecurity", as word of the year. — PA Media/dpa

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Oman to witness lots of Shakespearian characters in this legendary performance

By Kabeer Yousuf

Dive into the captivating world of literature, and you'll find yourself effortlessly acquainted with iconic figures like Julius Caesar, Othello, Romeo, Juliet, Antony, Cleopatra, Macbeth, Desdemona, and Shylock. These timeless characters have not just lingered in the realm of imagination; they've become cherished companions, enriching our lives with their enduring presence. So, whether you're a literary enthusiast or just beginning your literary journey, these characters will warmly embrace you, leaving an indelible mark on your soul.

But can you guess all these characters from the master epics of this legendary writer, William Shakespeare, to come on stage together at once??

Hold on and take a deep breath. All the characters from the works of the Bard of Avon are coming

alive on a stage in Muscat, as he aptly said, "All the world's a stage, and men and women are merely players," a stark reality of life that still stares at generations after generations.

A mega-drama titled 'Itihasam', translated as 'The Legend', is all set to traverse the spectators to a different world altogether, as nearly forty-five actors supported by over fifty technicians, organisers and artists have been engaged for more than eight months in the making of this epic work to ensure an unmatched stage experience is given to the audience.

These male and female artistes have let many of their joyous moments and personal priorities in their lives go in the last eight months, keeping their mind, soul, and body dedicated to the acclaimed writer, and have been grooving with the old Anglo-Saxon music, costumes, and stages every day.

Language is no barrier in any epic theatrical presentation



wherein the message is conveyed with many non-verbal cues and the grandeur of the entire production transcends cultures and races, overwhelming the audience; hence, although the play will be in Malayalam, it will also have subtitles in English and Arabic. The 2-hour play is set to be one of the biggest productions in recent times, attracting nearly 2,000 people for the two shows on November 3rd and 4th at the Oman Theatre Society at 6.30 pm

"Crafting the drama Itihasam was an epic journey filled with immense struggle. Our greatest challenge was managing the time of our dedicated working professional actors, who rehearsed tirelessly for six months. Each character was born from the depths of their voice and appearance, a testament to their commitment," said Rajesh Balakrishnan, the director of the play.

In one way, the artistes behind the play presented by International Organisation

Creative Events and Bhavalaya Art and Cultural Foundation bet that the arid desert lands of Oman is playing host to an Elizabethan world, transporting the audience to a time of quills and candlelight, of passions and tragic flaws.

Speaking to the Observer, Dr J Retnakumar, President and Founder of Bhavalaya Art and Culture said, "The inspiration to bring Shakespearean theatre to Oman was born from a deep desire to infuse our culture with the timeless brilliance of the Bard. It was a journey marked by relentless struggle, assembling a vast cast and crew dedicated to the cause. We faced the monumental task of recreating the old English world on stage, and we were fortunate to have special stage craft experts join us from India, contributing their expertise to our vision," he said, adding that, "Itihasam is our labour of love, a testament to the power of collaboration and the unwavering belief in the transformative magic of



theatre."

As the rehearsal camps became all the more active and enlivening through the night, the burden of the characters and a flawless presentation have been shared by one and all and as the night unfurled with a cacophony of sound from the light-men, script supervisor, assistants, makeup artists, the resonance of Shakespeare's timeless Ophelia wept, Hamlet torn apart and Desdemona lost in love making those special invitees to the camp weep along.

As the Bard of Avon said "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them", 'Itihasam' stage play will be a befitting tribute to one of the greatest English writers who enriched during his lifetime that spanned nearly 52 years from 1564 to 1616 from the land of the Sultan.

ART

Icons of UK's industrial age enjoy cultural and economic revival



ONCE THE epicentre of global trade, the awe-inspiring buildings of northern England's industrial age have reinvented themselves as cultural and economic hubs feted by artists from David Hockney to Noel Gallagher and Sting.

Inspired by Renaissance figures such as the Medici family, the textile titans of 18th and 19th century Britain built monumental structures designed to stand "forever" as a testament to their power and tastes. These industrialists combined Italian archi-

tectural flair with the natural gift of the local golden "Yorkstone" to transform the hills of West Yorkshire in particular.

But as the country's textile sector went into decline after World War II, many of these icons of Britain's heritage fell into disrepair and were demolished.

However thanks to the ambitious visions of recent custodians, others have been saved and become cultural hubs, showcasing world-class talent.

Two of the best examples are Salts Mill near Bradford — the

largest factory in Europe when it opened in 1853 — and the Piece Hall in nearby Halifax.

In its pomp, some 5,000 workers produced miles of cloth each day at Salts Mill, but there was little interest when it went on sale in the 1980s.

Inspired by childhood memories of the mill, its grand beauty and his long-time friendship with local artist turned global star Hockney, entrepreneur Jonathan Silver hit on the unique idea to turn it into a gallery in 1987. — **AFP**

ENVIRONMENT

Plastic waste in rivers may carry dangerous microbes



Volunteers try to clear a dam which is filled with discarded plastic bottles and other garbage, blocking Vacha Dam. — **AFP file photo**

PLASTIC LITTER in rivers might be allowing dangerous pathogens to hitch-hike downstream, a new study published on Wednesday found.

The research, which focused on one UK river, found that dumped plastic, wooden sticks and the water itself were a breeding ground for communities of microorganisms, potentially providing a reservoir for bacteria and viruses known to cause human diseases and antibiotic resistance.

"Our findings indicate that plastics in freshwater bodies may contribute to the transport of potential pathogens and antibiotic resistance genes," said lead author Vinko Zadajlovic of the University of Antofagasta in Chile.

"This could have indirect but significant implications for human

health," he said.

Antibiotic resistance is a growing public health threat. In 2019, infections related to antibiotic resistance are estimated to have killed 2.7 million people worldwide. By 2050 they are predicted to cause 10 million deaths worldwide, according to the study, published in the journal Microbiome.

When plastic ends up in water its surface is overrun within minutes by nearby microbes.

The researchers submerged samples for a week in the River Sowe in Warwickshire and West Midlands England, downstream from a wastewater treatment plant.

They found significant differences in the microbe communities depending on the material sampled. Wastewater is required to be

treated and disinfected to reduce microbial hazards and any adverse impacts they might have on human and environmental health.

But the water samples that the researchers collected in February of 2020 harboured human pathogens such as Salmonella, Escheria most commonly known as E.Coli, and Streptococcus responsible for strep throat.

That underscores "the pressing need for stricter monitoring of wastewater treatment plants," said Zadajlovic.

Meanwhile, the plastic and wood samples attracted "opportunistic" bacteria such as Pseudomonas aeruginosa and aeromonas, known to pose risk to people with compromised immune systems. — **AFP**



The relevance of Muscat Art and its commentary on pressing issues

By Yeru Ebuén
& Zuwaina al Sulimani

A piece of art is not judged based on size. If it is, artist Anwar Sonya would definitely take home any prize for the biggest painting in Sultanate of Oman, having created some of the most ginormous paintings that adorn the walls of palaces of prominent people in the Sultanate and some of the most prestigious museums in the country and even abroad.

Sonya is just one of the prominent names taking part in this year's Muscat Art, an exhibition that sought to unite local and international artists with a fundamental goal of "elevating cultural consciousness and underscore the significance of safeguarding artistic creations, thereby ensuring their enduring legacy for generations to come."

Launched on October 30, the three-day exhibit was held under the auspices of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat.

Other than Sonya, prominent figures in the art sec-

tor joining the exhibit include Rashid al Kindi, Yusef al Nhayy, Sana al Humaidi, Saleh al Alawi, Saud al Hanini, Ahmed al Maamari, Saleh al Shukaili, Hassan Dawood, Alia al Farsi and Matti Sirvio.

In total, there were 200 artists who took part in this year's exhibition providing not just variety but a comprehensiveness and diversity that gives an amazing insight into the growth of art in the country today.

Visiting the exhibition is like stepping into Wonderland where reality mixes with the surreal, where abstract fades into the simpleness of black and white and then eventually dances with the chaos of beautiful colours.

Sculptures can be found all over and one that takes attention include a giant silver hominid sporting what appears to be a crown. Some of the most remarkable sculptures also include those created by Ali al Jabri whose art explores the relationship of art and nature and using some of the hardest medium to work with including marble.

Some of the emerging artists not only venture into sustainable territory using

materials found in nature, but also adding a unique strong voice into the evolving art scene of Oman.

"Beyond the realm of art fairs, the influence of Muscat Art extends into broader horizons. This is achieved through supplementary endeavours designed to support individuals within the artistic realm, bolstering a holistic and sustainable art ecosystem that encompasses all aspects of creativity," shared the organisers on their social accounts.

For those who missed the opening, there were several cultural activities that took place including performances that celebrated the unique traditions not just of Oman but artists who are participating in the celebration.

A COMMENTARY ON THE PLIGHT OF THE PALESTINIANS

Supported by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the exhibit was open daily from 1 pm to 9 pm giving visitors opportunity to delve inside the imaginative minds of the participating artists, diving into their particular view-

points and visual storylines.

With artists from Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iran, India and Italy taking part, it also successfully connected artists, art lovers, buyers and even curators.

While Muscat Art has always been a platform for celebrating creativity, this year, it has taken on a more profound meaning. Artists are using their talent to draw attention to the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza using their paintings as a reminder to the world to stop the genocide of the Palestinians people.

Their art speaks not only of their artistic prowess, but also of their empathy for humanity. They use their canvases to demand a stop

to the ongoing genocide on Gaza, and calling for a stop to the killing of innocent children and women in Gaza.

In past editions, the Muscat Art Exhibition has successfully created a space where art lovers can engage with artists and learn about their creative processes. It also allows for the artists to feel supported and celebrated. This year, with the support of key partners such as be'ah, Oman Post, and Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN), the event has grown triple when it comes to participants and as per the organiser has definitely broke attendance records compared to the previous editions.

